WORKS OF LOVE

By SØREN KIERKEGAARD

TRANSLATED FROM THE DANISH BY

DAVID F. SWENSON

AND LILLIAN MARVIN SWENSON

WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

DOUGLAS V. STEERE

PRINCETON, NEW JERSEY
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY PRESS
1949

SECOND PRINTING 1949

PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION
BY DOUGLAS V. STEERE
page vii

VOLUME I
page 1

VOLUME II
page 167

NOTES
page 311

INTRODUCTION

SOME great writers are more articulate than others about what they believe to have been the mission of their career as an author. Søren Kierkegaard, with a power of introspection and self-analysis that has rarely been matched in history, was singularly specific about his objective as a writer. He sought to point out how a man might become a Christian when he already was one. Not that this restoration was an easy task. Kierkegaard once went so far as to say, "It is easier to become a Christian when I am not a Christian than to become a Christian when I am one."[1] Kierkegaard never tired of pointing out that there is a certain immunity to the full implications of Christian commitment built up by imbibing it in diluted form from birth. He felt himself, therefore, called to the "role of the missionary within Christendom itself, aiming to introduce Christianity into Christendom."[2]

Writing in Denmark a century ago to reach a church well established in a broad pattern of bourgeois security, to a people who rendered lip service to this church but who in personal, social and political decisions took little account of their obedience to God and His revelation, to a generation that had not yet openly rebelled against Christianity but who were quietly burying it under a deceptive funeral coverlet of the roses and ferns of surface observance, Kierkegaard presented by means of a whole religious literature the costly claim of what it meant to be a Christian. "In all eternity," he wrote, "it is impossible for me to compel a person to accept an opinion, a conviction, a belief. But one thing I can do: I can compel him to take notice."[3] And his presentation of the Christian claim on the life of the individual was so ruthlessly searching that again and again during the past century German, Russian, French, Italian and Spanish, and now English and American, thinkers have turned to him and have felt his rapier draw blood from them and sting them into a fresh reckoning with the Christian witness.

It is this kind of task that he is about in his greatest single work on Christian ethics, his *Works of Love*. It was finished, so he tells us in his *Journals*, on August 2, 1847, and actually published the following year. Europe was on the verge of another of those social earth tremors that was to carry the late eighteenth century revolutions into nearly every capital of Europe and seek to compel further recognition of the principles involved. But these events in no way influenced the content of the *Works of Love* nor would they have done so even if Kierkegaard had been writing after they had occurred. For Kierkegaard sought to enunci-

[1] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript* (Princeton University Press, 1941), p. 327.
[2] *The Point of View* (Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 138.
[3] *The Point of View*, p. 35.

ate these Christian moral principles from the very nature of the Christian message itself, and left it to others to make the appropriate personal application of them to the contemporary scene. "But the maximum of attainment is simultaneously to sustain an absolute relationship to the absolute end, and a relative relationship to relative ends."[4] The absolute end is always set forth as an inward unconditional obedience to God, and in his *Works of Love* Kierkegaard explores what is involved in that unconditional obedience if we are to follow Jesus' formulation of the great commandment: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" and to carry out what is involved in Paul's conception of love, found in the thirteenth chapter of Corinthians.

In his *Journals*, Kierkegaard whimsically remarks that "most people really believe that the Christian commandments [e.g., to love one's neighbor as oneself] are intentionally a little too severe—like setting the clock ahead half an hour to make sure of not being late in the morning."[5] His *Works of Love* is a presentation of the inward ethical demand of neighbor-love as having been given without a shade of oriental hyperbole (Christ did not permit a cheaper edition of what it was to be a follower), and is laid upon us in such a way that we can, by living under it, recognize what an absolute ethical demand really means and what it calls for in regard to our whole life orientation.

The Christian ethic of neighbor-love as depicted by Kierkegaard is not kin to Shaftesbury's emotion of the beauty of love or to Hume's loving feeling of sympathy for all. It more closely approaches the sterner character of the Kantian categorical imperative. Its objectivity and universality are not made to rest upon the intermittent character of fickle human feelings, or upon emotions that may be even more variable than the weather, but instead are laid upon the will. Nor is the universality of its application made subject to the political or social constellation of the moment that decrees whether it is good form to love a Samaritan or a Russian or a Finn or a German or an Oriental or a Negro or a proletarian or the President of the Chamber of Commerce. Jesus, in gathering up the Old Testament witness at its highest, declares, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," and in that *Thou shalt*, issuing from the very nature of God Himself, the will has an authoritative directive given to it which lifts the love of neighbor, the unlimited liability for the neighbor, out of the realm of the optional. Now it is no longer a matter of private inclination, of private aptitude, or of following the current pattern of the racial, national or social group to which I belong. Now neighbor-love has been grounded in the deep earnestness that comes from having God, the unchanging One, lay this command upon us, a

[4] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, p. 371.
[5] *Journals* (Oxford University Press, 1938), p. 242.

command that acknowledges no off-season, no exception, no moratorium, and judges our right to self-concern in terms of whether we have already shown equal concern for our neighbor.

This universality is further applied by making my neighbor, just as in Tolstoy's famous story of *The Three Questions*, whomever I am in touch with, whoever is in need. "If you do not see him so close at hand that before God you see him unconditionally in every man, then you do not see him at all." This makes him not my well beloved and most obviously pleasant neighbor, but my neighbor irrespective of his faults, his unpleasant manners, his failings. My neighbor thus may be my enemy, and I am still bound by God's holy authority to be liable for him, to love him as myself. I may even be brought to know how much I love God by how much I love that neighbor to whom by natural inclination I am least drawn.

This universality is made still more binding by Kierkegaard's emphasis upon the "*Thou* shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." This command is not to mankind in general, as a wise course of conduct to take. There is no option in it and it is addressed personally to me. If I live in earnestness before God, then *I*, apart from all evasive comparison with what others might be inclined to do in a similar situation, apart from all attempts at extenuating circumstances that might excuse me for this time, quite apart from my capacities or resources which may apparently be quite insufficient materially to assist my neighbor by my love, hence apart from all assurance of results, *I* must nevertheless love him. "If someone has cut my hands off, I cannot play the zither, and if someone has cut my leg off, then I cannot dance . . . and if I myself lie with a broken arm or leg, then I cannot rush into the flames to save another's life" (II, 7), Kierkegaard wrote, but went on to add, "but I can be compassionate everywhere." A compassionate glance or an inward prayer, when more cannot be given, may in God's sight be the most complete fulfillment of this command. "As for 'accomplishing' anything, a man has nothing to do with it, it is God's affair, God's bestowal upon the individual."[6]

This makes it possible for the command to be carried out by all. "Love is not an art like poetry, possible only to the few endowed for it, it is open and accessible to all" (II, 10). For by placing the fulfillment of the command of neighbor-love in the intention of the actor and not in the physical means of fulfillment it becomes binding on all who accept God's authority, no matter what their age or condition or wealth or station may be.

Yet, after calling attention to the Kantian formalistic character of this Christian ethic of neighbor-love in contrast to an ethic based on

[6] *Training in Christianity* (Oxford University Press, 1941), p. 182.

feeling, it is important to note the genuine difference in the frame in which the two ethical systems of Kant and Kierkegaard are set, a difference which profoundly affects the whole tone of the two positions.

For Kierkegaard in both his *Either/Or* and his *Stages on Life's Way* has depicted the strictly ethical category and has done it almost wholly in Kantian terms. But like the aesthetic category which is also depicted there, he has then shown its basic instability and shown how it may collapse and compel the individual to seek a deeper existence sphere (the religious) in which to live. The critical point in the ethical category Kierkegaard insists is its inability to get over the hiatus or chasm between recognized duty and its performance, when performance involves pain to our pride or our inclination or the defiance of the momentary way of the crowd. This failure to follow duty in old-fashioned terms is called sin, and Kierkegaard has shown the ethical category shattering on that rock of sin, and no ethical appeal to reason or duty or ultimate pleasure is sufficient to stay the condition where "I do those things which I ought not to do and leave undone those things which I ought to do, and there is no health in me."

It is in this way that Kierkegaard depicts the ethical category as dethroned from ever providing a permanently satisfying, self-sufficient existence-sphere for men. On the other hand, once one has entered the deepest religious sphere of existence, both the aesthetical and the ethical are restored again, but now restored as dependent phases of existence, drawing their central strength and directive from the object of the religious commitment into which the man has entered. Thus the Christian ethic, according to Kierkegaard, involves the Grace of God and involves a life in active response to that Grace, a life therefore that is lived in inward earnestness. This "earnestness is a man's God-relationship. Everywhere where the thought of God is present in what a man does, thinks and says, there is earnestness" (II, 8). This is no remote relationship to a noumenal order which is postulated from the solid experience of Kantian duty. It is an ethic whose formal character is derivative from an intensely personal center.

Kierkegaard's opening prayer in the *Works of Love* sets the note of God's Grace to which a Christian's love must always be in debt and be a lesser response, when he writes, "Thou who didst hold nothing back, but didst give everything in love." This indebtedness on our part is a central theme of the book and the command "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself" is made to those who have become aware of that debt. "As the peaceful lake is grounded darkly in the deep spring, so is human love mysteriously grounded in God's love."

In the chasm, the hiatus between my interest and my neighbor's interest, that neither egoistic nor universalistic hedonism, nor a feeling of

the beauty of the act, nor an instinct of benevolence, nor even a stern voice of rationally discernible duty can regularly bridge, Kierkegaard places not alone a new factor but a new ground. He places a third party, a third person: the loving God to whom we are hopelessly indebted. In this intensely personal relationship as we love back to Him, he places our neighbor before us. God is made the middle term who lifts this relationship with neighbor up out of all partiality, out of all the vagaries of human feelings, and has us love our neighbor as we love ourselves, and do it always in the light and power of our love for Him. "For ultimately love to God is the decisive thing; from it stems love to the neighbor. . . . In earthly love and friendship partiality is the middle term. In love to the neighbor, God is the middle term; if you love God above all else, then you also love your neighbor and in your neighbor every man. Only by loving God above all else can one love his neighbor and in the neighbor every man" (I, 2 B).

However, this middle term of all true love is not alone to bridge the chasm with an impetus and an authority that raises man above his momentary whims and impulses. It is also to purge the relationship with my neighbor of all partiality—for before God all souls are of equal worth. "Your neighbor is your equal . . . for with your neighbor you have human equality before God . . . but every man unconditionally has this equality, and has it unconditionally." This lifts the relationship from being qualified by its object, as earthly love and friendship outside the Christian pale are qualified. Now it is made a relationship that embraces everyone, and yet everyone individually.

It is this radical Christian leveling of the barriers of rank between persons, even if it is only done inwardly, that Nietzsche so bitterly opposed in his *Will to Power*, and Nietzsche even came to regard it as his life mission to seek to restore the order of rank and caste and station which he saw Christianity undermining. And it has been this very force of equality before God that many have regarded as the revolutionary power in Christianity, that dwarfs the programs of all secular revolutionary movements into puny insignificance, compared to its continually exercised power.

Yet Kierkegaard is cautious in the conclusions which he accepts from the middle term's drawing us into an impartial love for each neighbor which cuts through every worldly difference. His central position of inwardness is strictly adhered to here, and this issue of equality lays bare the position and presents it both in all of its fascinating power and in all of its scandalous vulnerability to abuse. The vulnerability to abuse stands out as Kierkegaard acknowledges the "differences" as inevitably present so long as the world exists: "As little as the Christian lives or can live without a physical body, just as little can he live outside the dif-

ferences of earthly life to which every individual by birth, by condition, by circumstances, by education, etc., belongs. . . . These differences must continue as long as the temporal existence continues, and must continue to tempt every man who comes into the world" (I, 2 C). "Externally it [Christianity] does not wish to bring about any change at all in the external; it wishes to understand the external, purify it, consecrate it, and so make everything new, while everything remains old" (I, 3 B). Taken by itself, this position could amply justify the most intransigent social conservatism, which all evidence goes to show was the political and economic position which Kierkegaard personally espoused in the Denmark of his day. And his pleas to the poor to find in their lot an inward devotion to God which accepted it without bitterness or protest, could also be construed in the tradition of a completely other-worldly religion which administered an opiate upon all demands for improvement of the conditions of this life.

Yet the impressive power of his doctrine of a religious ethic of inwardness becomes apparent as he explains how he would have the Christian inwardly overcome these differences by the aid of the middle term. "Christianity has not wished to storm forth to abolish the differences, neither those of distinction nor of humbleness, nor has it wished in a worldly sense to effect a worldly agreement between the differences; but it wants the differences to hang loosely on the individual, loosely like the cape the king casts off to reveal himself; loosely like the ragged cloak in which a supernatural being has concealed itself. When the difference hangs thus loosely, then that other essential self is always glimpsed in every individual, that common to all, that eternal resemblance, the equality. . . . This expectant solemnity which, without halting the course of life, renews itself every day through the eternal and through the equality of eternity, every day saves its soul from the differences in which it still continues: this would be the reflection of eternity" (I, 2 C). Or he expresses it again: "Christianity has not wished to tumble governments from the throne in order to set itself upon the throne; it has never in an external sense striven for a place in the world of which it is not a part, and yet it has infinitely changed everything which it permitted and which it permits to continue. As the blood throbs through every nerve, so Christianity in the conscience-relation wishes to penetrate everything. . . . This is the miracle of Christianity, more wonderful than that one of changing water into wine; this miracle in all stillness, without any change of rulers, moreover without a hand being moved, of making every man, divinely understood, into a king. . . . And there within, where the Christian dwells in the conscience-relation, there is everything changed. . . . Thus Christianity transforms every relationship between man and man into a conscience-relationship" (I, 2 C).

As the Christian's supreme task, this hidden inward revolution is in keeping with his portrait of the true knight of faith in *Fear and Trembling,* who outwardly appears like everyone else, has an excellent appetite, works hard at a common occupation, sleeps without a dream, and yet at every instant is yielding his life utterly to God. And it contains within it a transforming power by which God may reshape the world, i.e., by the consciences of individual knights of faith who are devoted to Him, and who, without any identifiable uniform of a common pattern or plan in their role and station in life, serve the good.

He has never expressed his own conviction on this matter more sharply than in a little treatise called "My Position as a Religious Writer in Christendom and my Tactics," which he concludes by saying: "With regard to the established order, I have always done the opposite of attacking it; I have never been in or with the 'opposition' which wants to get rid of government, nor have I been allied with it; but I have furnished what may be called a 'corrective,' the intent of which was: For God's sake let us continue to be ruled by those who are appointed and called to this task, and that they should stand fast in the fear of God willing only one thing, the 'Good.' . . . Never has the race and the individual within it discovered so deeply that it and every individual within it needs and craves that which the loving Godhead in love discovered, namely, the unconditional. . . . Require the navigator to sail without ballast—he capsizes. Let the race, the individual, make the experiment of doing without the unconditional—it is a whirlpool and remains such. . . . Hence 'the individual' himself must relate himself to the unconditional. . . . This is what I in proportion to the talents granted to me, with the utmost expenditure of effort and with many sacrifices, have consistently fought for, fighting against every tyranny, including that of the numerical. This effort of mine has been interpreted as hatred, as monstrous pride and arrogance—I believed and still believe that this is Christianity and love for one's 'neighbor.' "[7]

But having shaken the secular world out of its lethargy and God-defiance, there is a further stage which is omitted by Kierkegaard. Whether it was left as a detail for men to apply as they were given wisdom by God, or whether it was in that vein of indifference to the social and political order in the outer world which is so strong in both Jesus and Paul, it is not easy to tell. Certainly for the Old Testament prophets, they were drawn not only to denounce individual wickedness but to call upon a whole people to reform. They were concerned with public wickedness and did not hesitate to announce the "tumbling of governments," if those kingdoms sat astride God's purpose in the world and blocked it. Nor does Kierkegaard's position reckon with the corporate aspects of the

[7] "My Work as an Author," in *Point of View,* pp. 162-64.

charismatic Christian community that may show a genuinely positive corporate response to God's calling. For Kierkegaard, the group, the world, is always evil, always attacking neighbor-love. This aspect of Kierkegaard's doctrine of inwardness goes beyond indifference to the social order. It not only despairs of its improvement but regards the world as inevitably God-defiant. "Alas, the world seldom or never thinks of God; that is the reason why it completely misunderstands every life whose most essential and steadfast thought is precisely the thought of God" (I, 5). And as a result the Kingdom, for Kierkegaard, must always remain hidden from this world. No longer can that favorite text of Rendel Harris's taken from the Apocryphal II Clement, 12, ". . . When the two shall be one, and that which is without as that which is within," be an aspiration that faint outward evidences and deep inward confirmations sustain.

Yet, in conclusion, it is important to disengage the accidental from the essential, and it must be made clear that these criticisms are leveled primarily against Kierkegaard's own personal reluctance to apply the implications of his ethic to the social situation. The ethic itself is not subject to any such attack. Even Kierkegaard in an unguarded moment credits the leveling power of this Christian ethic with having removed the "master-thrall" relationship in society. And in Kierkegaard's own conception of a society in which real earnestness reigns, these differences are to be robbed of all corrupting possessiveness and worn like loose garments. In his effort to recover for a secularized world the unconditional, and to relate each individual to the unconditional, and through the unconditional back unconditionally to his neighbor, he has rendered the field of ethics an inestimable service. For he has placed ethical decisions in a frame that transcends morality's inherent tendency toward legalism and toward pride, and has subjected the ethical agent who lives in earnestness to a continual purging of his accomplishments in the humbling fire of a recognition of the poverty of all that he has done in the light of the love he owed.

DOUGLAS V. STEERE

Haverford College
Haverford, Pennsylvania
August, 1944

WORKS OF LOVE

SOME CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS
IN THE FORM OF DISCOURSES

BY

S. KIERKEGAARD

Volume I

Copenhagen
1847

CONTENTS

PAGE

I The Hidden Life of Love
and Its Recognition by Its Fruits 5

II A. Thou *Shalt* Love 15
B. Thou Shalt Love Thy *Neighbor* 37
C. *Thou* Shalt Love Thy Neighbor 51

III A. Love Is the Fulfillment of the Law 75
B. Love Is a Matter of Conscience 110

IV Our Duty To Love the Men We See 125

V Our Duty To Remain in the Debt
of Love to One Another 142

FOREWORD

THESE Christian meditations which are the fruit of much reflection will be slowly but also easily understood, although they will certainly prove very difficult to anyone who by a cursory and merely inquisitive reading makes them so. "That individual" who first considers whether he will read them or not, should he finally decide to read them, will sympathetically consider whether the difficulty and the ease, when these are thoughtfully weighed on the balance, are rightly proportioned to one another, so that the Christian idea may not be given a false weight by making the difficulty or the ease too great.

They are "Christian reflections," and therefore not about love, but about the works of love. They concern the works of love, not as if all its works were herein enumerated and described, far from it; not as if the particular works herein described were now described once for all—praise God, that is impossible! For that which in its whole wealth is *essentially* inexhaustible, is also in its least expression essentially indescribable, because it is essentially present everywhere in its wholeness, and essentially incapable of being described.

S.K.

PRAYER

How could anything rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten, Thou God of Love, from whom all love comes in heaven and on earth; Thou who didst hold nothing back but didst give everything in love; Thou who art love, so the lover is only what he is through being in Thee! How could anything rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten, Thou who didst make manifest what love is, Thou, our Saviour and Redeemer, who gave Himself to save us all! How could anything rightly be said about love if Thou wert forgotten, Thou Spirit of Love, Thou who dost abate nothing of Thine own, but dost call to mind that sacrifice of love, dost remind the believer to love as he is loved, and his neighbor as himself! O Eternal Love! Thou who art everywhere present, and never without testimony in what may here be said about love, or about works of love. For it is certainly true that there are some acts which the human language particularly and narrow-mindedly calls acts of charity; but in heaven it is certainly true that no act can be pleasing unless it is an act of love: sincere in its self-abnegation, a necessity for love, and, just because of this, without claim or merit.

I

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF LOVE AND ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS FRUITS

For every tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes.—LUKE 6:44

IF it were true, as a conceited cleverness believes, proud of not being imposed upon, that one should believe nothing that one does not see with the sensual eye, then must one first and foremost cease to believe in love. And if one did this and did it for fear of being deceived, would one then not be deceived? One may be deceived in many ways; one may be deceived by believing the false, but one may also be deceived by not believing the true; one may be deceived by appearances, but one may also be deceived by the appearance of shrewdness, by the flattering conceit which is absolutely certain it cannot be deceived. And which deception is the more dangerous? Whose recovery is the more doubtful, that of one who does not see, or his who sees and yet does not see? Which is more difficult—to awaken one who is sleeping, or to awaken one who, awaking, dreams that he is awake? Which sight is more distressing, one which immediately and unequivocally moves one to tears, the sight of the unhappy deception of love, or that which in a certain sense might occasion laughter, the sight of the self-delusion whose foolish conceit of being incapable of being deceived is certainly ridiculous and something to laugh at, were not the ridiculous here an even stronger expression for horror, because it indicates that the one self-deceived is not even worthy of tears?

To defraud oneself of love is the most terrible deception of all. It is an eternal loss for which there is no compensation either here or in eternity. For if otherwise, however else it may differ, the question is about being deceived about love, then the victim still retains his hold on love, and the deception consists merely in there being no love where it was supposed to be. But the self-deceived has excluded and does exclude himself from love. Much has also been said about being deceived by life or in life; but one who self-deceived defrauded himself of living, has suffered an irreparable loss. Eternity may yet richly compensate a man who all his life had been deceived by life; but the self-deceived has prevented himself from gaining the eternal. Oh, what has one whose love made him a victim of human deception really lost if in eternity it appears that love abides while the deception has ceased! But the one who by shrewdness defrauded himself by cleverly falling into the snare of cleverness, even if throughout his whole life he conceitedly deemed himself lucky, what has he not lost if in eternity it appears that he de-

frauded himself! For a man may perhaps succeed in getting along in the temporal existence without love; he may succeed perhaps in getting through time without discovering the self-deception; he may perhaps succeed—how terrible!—in continuing in his self-conceit, glorying in it; but in eternity he cannot do without love, and he cannot fail to discover that he has forfeited everything. How earnest, how terrible existence is, just when it chastisingly permits the self-willed man to act for himself, so that he is allowed to live on, glorying in being deceived, until sometime he has to testify that he everlastingly defrauded himself! Truly, eternity will not be mocked; what is more, it does not even need to use force, but with supreme effectiveness it uses a bit of mockery to punish the presumptuous man most terribly. What is it which connects the temporal and the eternal, what except love, which just for this reason is before everything, and which abides when everything else is past? But precisely because love is the bond of the eternal, and because the temporal existence and eternity are heterogeneous, for that reason love may sometimes seem burdensome to the earthly prudence of the temporal existence, and therefore in this existence it may seem a tremendous relief to the sensual man to cast off this bond of the eternal.

The self-deceived man certainly believes that he can rely upon himself, moreover, that he has more than conquered. In his fool's conceit it is hidden from him how distressing his life is. That "he has ceased to sorrow," we shall not deny. But what advantage is this to him when his chance of salvation lies in his beginning in earnest to sorrow over himself! The self-deceived man even thinks perhaps that he is able to comfort others who were victims of a perfidious deception. But what madness for one who had sustained an eternal injury to wish to heal someone who at most is sick unto death! Through a strange contradiction, the self-deceived man perhaps believes that he is sympathetic with the unfortunate victims of a deception. But if you listen carefully to his consoling speech and healing wisdom, then you will know his love by its fruits: by its bitter mockery, by the shrewdness of its reasoning, by its poisonous spirit of mistrust, by the cutting coldness of its obduracy; that is, it will be known by its fruits that there is no love in his sympathy.

We know the tree by its fruits; we do not gather grapes from thorns or figs from thistles; if you try to gather them there, then you will not only gather in vain, but the thorns will prove to you that you gather in vain. *For every tree is known by its* OWN *fruit.* It may very well be that there are two fruits very closely resembling each other; the one is palatable and delicious, the other bitter and poisonous. Sometimes too the poisonous one is very palatable, the healthful one bitter to the taste. So also love is known by its *own* fruit. If a man makes a mistake, it must be either because he does not know how to judge rightly in this partic-

ular case, or because he does not know the fruits. Thus a man may make a mistake and call that love which is really self-love: when he is absolutely certain that he cannot live without the beloved, but he will listen to nothing about its being the task and requirement of love that a man should deny himself and renounce the selfishness of love. Or he may make a mistake and call a weak complacency by the name of love; or a demoralized whining, or harmful connections, or natural vanity, or selfish associations, or the bribery of flattery, or momentary impressions, or relationships of the temporal existence, by the name of love.

There is a flower which is called the flower of eternity, but there is also, strange to say, a so-called everlasting flower which, like perishable flowers, blooms only at a certain time of year: what a misnomer to call the latter an everlasting flower! And yet at the time of blossoming it does not look so deceptive. But every tree is known by its own fruit, and love too is known by its fruit, and the love about which Christianity speaks is known by its own fruit because it has the truth of the eternal in it. All other love, whether, humanly speaking, it withers early and is changed, or cherished it endures throughout the temporal existence, is nevertheless perishable, it merely blooms. In this lies precisely its fragility and its sadness; whether it blossoms for an hour or for seventy years, it merely blossoms. But Christian love is eternal. Therefore no man who understands himself would think of saying of Christian love that it blossoms. No poet who understands himself would think of celebrating Christian love in song. For that which the poet sings must contain the sadness which is his own life's mystery: it must bloom—and, alas, it must perish. But the Christian love abides, and just for that reason it *is*: for what blooms perishes, and what perishes blooms, but what *is* cannot be sung, it must be believed and it must be lived.

However, when one says that love is known by its fruits, then one also says that love itself in a certain sense is in secret, and just because of this secrecy it can only be known by its manifest fruits. This is absolutely true. Every life, including the life of love, is hidden, but is revealed in another way. The life of the plant is hidden, the fruit is its manifestation. The life of thought is hidden, its expression in speech is its revelation. The sacred words we read have a twofold meaning, while concealingly they speak only of one; obviously the statement contained one thought, but secretly it also contained another.

So let us then call attention to both thoughts, as we now speak about:

THE HIDDEN LIFE OF LOVE AND ITS RECOGNITION BY ITS FRUITS.

Whence comes love? Where is its source and its wellspring? Where is the secret place from which it issues? Truly, that place is hidden, or

it is in secret. There is a place in the heart of man; from this place issues the life of love, for "out of the heart are the issues of life." But you cannot see this place; however far you penetrate, the source withdraws in distance and secrecy. Even when you push farthest in, the source is always on beyond, like the source of the fountain which just when you are nearest is farther away. From this place love issues forth in manifold ways; but by none of these ways can you penetrate its hidden source. As God dwells in a light from which every ray of light which illumines the world issues, yet by none of these ways can a man enter in order to see God; for the way of light changes to darkness if one faces toward the light: so love dwells in secret, or is hidden in the heart. As the spring-fed mountain stream by the murmuring persuasiveness of its rippling entices, almost begs, a man to follow it along its course, and not inquisitively try to force his way to its source and reveal its hidden secret; as the rays of the sun invite men by their radiance to behold the glories of the world, but reprovingly punish the presumptuous man with blindness if he inquisitively and audaciously faces about to discover the source of the light; as faith invitingly volunteers to be man's companion on the way of life, but petrifies the one who impudently turns around in order to try to understand it: so it is love's wish and prayer that its secret source and its hidden life in the heart may remain a secret; that no one inquisitively and impudently shall try to force himself in disturbingly in order to see that which nevertheless he cannot see, but whose happiness and blessing he may certainly forfeit through his curiosity. It always causes the most painful suffering when the surgeon in operating is obliged to cut into the more vital and therefore the more secret parts of the body; so there is also the most painful suffering, and also the most demoralizing, when someone, instead of rejoicing in the manifestations of love, wishes to gratify himself by scrutinizing the love itself, that is, by disturbing it.

Love's secret life is in the heart, unfathomable, and it also has an unfathomable connection with the whole of existence. As the peaceful lake is grounded deep in the hidden spring which no eye can see, so a man's love is grounded even deeper in the love of God. If there were at bottom no wellspring, if God were not love, then there would be no quiet lake or human love. As the quiet lake is grounded darkly in the deep spring, so is human love mysteriously grounded in God's love. As the quiet lake invites you to look at it, but by its dark reflection prevents your looking down through it, so the mysterious origin of love in the love of God prevents you from seeing its source; if you think you see it, then you are deceived by a reflection, as if that which merely conceals the deeper source were the true source. As the ingenious cover, placed over a treasure for the express purpose of absolutely concealing the

treasure, looks like the bottom of the receptacle, so that reflection which but conceals something even deeper, looks deceptively like the deep bottom.

So the life of love is hidden; but its secret life is itself in motion and has eternity in it. As the quiet lake, however placidly it lies, is really running water—for is there not a wellspring at bottom?—so love, however quiet it is in its concealment, is ever flowing. But the quiet lake can become dry if its source sometime fails; the life of love, on the contrary, has an eternal wellspring. This life is fresh and everlasting; no cold can chill it, it is too fervent for that; and no heat can exhaust it, its coolness is too fresh for that. But it is hidden. And when the Gospel speaks of the recognition of this life by its fruits, then is not its meaning after all this, that one should not trouble and disturb this hiding-place; that one should abandon the observations which but "benumb the spirit" and retard the growth?

Yet this hidden life of love is *recognizable by its fruits*; moreover, it is a necessity of love that it should be known by its fruits. Oh, how beautiful it is that this word which indicates the greatest wretchedness at the same time indicates the greatest wealth! To need, to have need and to be needy, how reluctant a man is to have this said about him! And yet we are expressing the highest praise when we say of a poet that he needs to write; of an orator that he needs to speak; of a girl that she needs to love. Ah, even the most needy person who has ever lived, if he still has had love, how rich has not his life been compared with the life of the only poor man, who lived his life through and never felt the need of anything! For this is certainly the maiden's greatest riches that she needs the beloved; this is the highest and truest wealth of the devout that he needs God. Ask them, ask the maiden if she could feel equally happy if she could get along just as well without the beloved; ask the devout if he understands or wishes that he could get along just as well without God! So it is with the recognition of love by its fruits, which precisely, therefore, if the relationship is right, is said to press forward, whereby again its richness is indicated. This might also cause the greatest agony if it were really true that in love itself there could be the self-contradiction that love commanded it be kept hidden, commanded that it should be unrecognizable. Would that not be as if the plant which felt the vigorous life and blessing of fertility, dared not let it be known, acted as if the blessing were a curse, kept it to itself, alas, as the secret of its inexplicable withering! Therefore it is not true. For even if a single particular expression of love, if a love affair, were pushed back by love in a painful concealment: the same life of love would nevertheless produce a new expression of love, and would still be known by its fruits. Oh, ye quiet martyrs of an unhappy love! What you suffered from a

love that must conceal a love indeed remained a secret; you never revealed it, such was the greatness of your love that made this sacrifice: and yet your love was known by its fruits! And perhaps just those fruits became precious, those which were matured by the quiet burning of a secret pain.

The tree is known by *its fruits*; for a tree is also known by its *leaves* but the fruit still affords the essential knowledge. If you, therefore, identified a tree by its leaves as being that particular tree, but in the time of fruit you discovered that it did not bear fruit, then you would know from this that it was not the tree it appeared to be from its leaves. This is true also concerning the recognition of love. The apostle John says, "My little children, let us not love in word or in tongue, but in deed and in truth." And with what better can we compare the words and expressions of love than with the leaves of a tree? For words and expressions and the inventions of language can also afford a knowledge of love, but they are not reliable. The same words in the mouth of one person can be so rich, so trustworthy, which in the mouth of another can be like the vague whisper of the leaves. The same words which in the mouth of one can be like the "blessed nourishing corn," in the mouth of another can be like the unfruitful beauty of the leaves. But because of this you must not restrain the words any more than you must conceal the visible emotion when it is genuine. For one may ungenerously wrong a man if one withholds from him that which is his due. Your friend, your beloved, your child, or whoever is the object of your affection, has also a right to an expression of this affection in words, if your heart truly prompts you. The emotion is not your own possession, but it belongs to the other; its expression is his due, since you in your emotion belong to him who causes that emotion, and who is conscious that you belong to him. When the heart is full you must not enviously, arrogantly, unfairly to the other, injure him by silently compressing the lips; you must let your mouth speak out of the heart's abundance. You should not be ashamed of your feelings, and even less of honestly giving everyone his due. But one must not love in words and forms of speech, nor should one recognize love in this way. On the contrary, one will know by such fruits, or by the fact that there are only leaves, that love has not yet reached its growing season. Sirach says warningly: "If you devour your leaves you will drop your fruit and leave yourself standing like a dry tree." For precisely by the fact of words and expressions being love's only fruit, one knows that a man has unseasonably stripped away the leaves, so that he gets no fruit; not to mention the more terrible fact that one sometimes recognizes the deception just by the words and expressions used. Consequently immature and deceptive love is known by the fact that words and verbal expressions are its only fruit.

We say about certain plants that we must plant the heart; so we may also say about human love: if it is really to bear fruit, and hence be known by its fruit, then we must first *plant the heart*. For love certainly issues from the heart; but let us not, in considering this, forget that eternal truth that love plants the heart. Every man knows the fugitive impulses of an irresolute heart, but the impulses of the natural heart are infinitely different from planting the heart in the sense of the eternal. And how seldom is this true that eternity acquires so much authority over a man that the love in him is able to establish itself everlastingly, or truly to plant the heart. However, this is the condition essential for bearing love's *own* fruit by which it is known. As the love itself is invisible, a man must therefore believe in it; so it is not to be known simply and unconditionally by any of its expressions as such.

There is no word in the human language, not a single one, not the most sacred, about which we are able to say: "If a man uses this word it unconditionally proves that he has love." On the contrary, it is always true that a word used by one man can assure us that he has love, and an absolutely contrary word used by another can assure us that he loves just as much; it is true that a word can assure us that love dwells in the heart of the one who uttered it, and not in another who nevertheless used the same word.

There is no act, not a single one, not the best, about which we unconditionally dare to say: "He who does this proves unconditionally that he loves." It depends on *how* he shows his love. There are, we know, deeds which in a special sense are called acts of charity. But truly, because one gives alms, because one visits the widow and clothes the naked, one's love is not thereby proved or even recognizable. For one can perform acts of charity in an unkind, moreover, even in a selfish way, and when this is the case, the act of charity is not a work of love. You have certainly very frequently seen this distressing sight; you have perhaps caught yourself doing what every honest man must confess about himself, just because he is not unkind and hardened enough to overlook the essential thing, you have caught yourself forgetting in *what* you do, *how* you do it. Alas, Luther may have said that not one single time in his whole life had he prayed absolutely undisturbed by any irrelevant thoughts; so too the honest man acknowledges that however often and however many times he willingly and gladly gave alms, he never did it except imperfectly, perhaps influenced by some accidental impression, perhaps by a capricious partiality, perhaps to satisfy his conscience, perhaps with an averted face—but not in the scriptural sense without the left hand perhaps becoming conscious of it—but thoughtlessly, possibly thinking of his own sorrow—instead of thinking of the affliction of the

poor, possibly seeking personal relief through giving alms—instead of wishing to alleviate poverty: so the act of charity did not in the highest sense become a work of love.

Hence *how* the word is spoken, and above all *how* it is meant, hence *how* the act is performed: this is the decisive thing in determining and in recognizing love by its fruits. But here again the point is that there is nothing, no "thus," about which it can unconditionally be said that it unconditionally proves the presence of love, or that it unconditionally proves that love is not present.

And yet it is certain that love must be known by its fruits. But the sacred words of our text are not uttered for the purpose of encouraging us to occupy ourselves in judging one another; they are, on the contrary, spoken admonishingly to the individual (to you, my hearer, and to me), in order to encourage him not to permit his love to become unfruitful, but to work so that it *may* be known by its fruits, whether others do recognize them or not. For he certainly must not labor for the sake of having his love known by its fruits, but labor so that it may be known by its fruits; in this labor he must guard himself so that the recognition of the love does not become more important to him than the one thing needful: that it bear fruit, and hence may be known by its fruit. One thing is true, whatever clever advice one may give a man, whatever precautions one can recommend to prevent being deceived by others, the Gospel demands something different and something far more important of the individual, that he bear in mind that a tree is known by its fruits, and that it is he or his love which the Gospel compares with a tree. The Gospel does not say, as would the speech of the clever: "Some of you will know the tree by its fruits." But it says: "The tree shall be known by its fruits." The explanation is that you, you who read these words of the Gospel, you are the tree. What the prophet Nathan added to the parable, "Thou art the man," the Gospel did not need to add, since it is already evident in the form of the expression, and in the fact that it is the word of an evangelist. For the divine authority of the Gospel does not speak to one man about another man, not to you, my hearer, about me, or to me about you. No, when the Gospel speaks, it speaks to the individual; it does not speak *about* us men, you and me, but it speaks *to* us men, you and me, and it speaks about the love that is known by its fruits.

If therefore some eccentric and fanatical, or hypocritical, person were to teach that love was such a secret emotion that it was too select to bear fruit, or so secret that its fruit neither proved anything for nor against it, moreover, that not even the poisonous fruit proved anything, then we should remember the Gospel words: the tree is known by its fruits. Not for the sake of criticizing but to defend ourselves against such asser-

tions, we shall call attention to the fact that that which always happens with respect to every apostolic utterance, happens here, that "he who acts in accordance with this word is like a man who built his house upon a rock." "When the storms come" and devastate the select fragility of that sensitive love; "when the winds blow and beat upon" the web of hypocrisy: then will the true love be known by its fruits. For truly love shall be known by its fruits, but it does not therefore follow from this that you should presume to be the judge; the tree too must be known by its fruits, but it does not therefore follow from this that there is one tree which shall presume to judge the others; on the contrary, it is always the individual tree which must—bear fruit. But a man should fear neither the one who can kill the body, nor the hypocrite. There is but One whom a man should fear, that is God; and there is but one for whom a man should fear, that is himself. Truly one who in fear and trembling before God feared for himself, has never been deceived by hypocrisy. But he who busied himself in tracking down hypocrites, whether he succeeded or not, must vigilantly watch to see that this too is not hypocrisy; for such discoveries are still hardly the fruits of love. On the other hand, the one whose love in truth bears its *own* fruit will involuntarily and unwittingly expose every hypocrite who comes near him, or else he will make him ashamed; but the lover will perhaps not even be conscious of this. The most mediocre defense against hypocrisy is shrewdness; moreover it is scarcely a defense, rather a dangerous proximity; the best defense against hypocrisy is love; and it is not merely a defense but a yawning chasm; through all eternity it has nothing to do with hypocrisy. And this is also a fruit by which love is known, in that it assures the lover against falling into the snare of hypocrisy.

But even if it is true that love is known by its fruits, let us not in our love for one another impatiently, suspiciously, condemningly, perpetually ask to see the fruits. The first point we developed in this discourse was that we must believe in love, otherwise we simply do not know that it exists; but now the discourse returns to that first point and says repeatedly: believe in love! This is the first and the last thing there is to say about love, if one wishes to know; but the first time it was said to oppose the impudent common sense which wished to deny the existence of love; now, on the contrary, after having explained its recognition by its fruits, it is said to oppose the sickly, timid, fastidious narrow-mindedness which in petty and wretched mistrust wishes to see the fruits. Do not forget that it would be a beautiful, a noble, a sacred fruit by which the love in your heart became recognizable, if in your relations to another man, whose love perhaps bore poorer fruit, you were loving enough to see his love as more beautiful than it was. If

suspicion can actually see something less than it is, then love can also see something greater than it is.

Do not forget that even when you are rejoicing in the fruits of love, when you know by them that love dwells in the other man, do not forget that it is even more blessed to believe in love. Just this constitutes a new expression for the depth of love, that when one has learned to know it by its fruits, one then returns to that first point, and returns to it as the highest, to believing in love. For the life of love is indeed known by the fruits which make it manifest, but the life itself is still more than the individual fruit, and more than all its fruits taken together, if you were to count them at any one moment. Therefore, the last, the most blessed, the unconditionally convincing characteristic of love abides: the love itself, which is known and recognized by the love in another. The like is known only by the like; only he who abides in love can know love as his love is also known.

II

A. THOU *SHALT* LOVE

But the second commandment is like unto it: Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself.—MATTHEW 22:39

EVERY speech, especially a portion of a speech, usually presupposes something from which it proceeds. He who desires to make the speech or the assertion a subject of reflection does well, therefore, to look first for this presupposition, in order to start from it. So there is also a presupposition contained in the text we read, which although it comes last is nevertheless the starting point. Therefore when we are told: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," then this statement contains the presupposition that every man loves himself. Consequently Christianity presupposes this, since Christianity, unlike those ambitious thinkers, by no means begins without presuppositions, or with a flattering assumption.

And would we dare to deny that what Christianity presupposes is true? But, on the other hand, could anyone so misunderstand Christianity as to believe it was its intention to teach that which worldly wisdom unanimously—alas, and yet divisively—teaches, that everyone loves himself best? Could anyone misunderstand this, as if it were the intention of Christianity to hold self-love in honor? On the contrary, it is its intention to strip us of our selfishness. This selfishness consists in loving one's self; but if one must love his neighbor as himself, then the commandment opens the lock of self-love as with a picklock, and the man with it. If the commandment about loving one's neighbor were expressed in some other way than by the use of this little phrase, "as thyself," which is at once so easy to use and yet has the tension of eternity, then the commandment would not be able thus to master the self-love. This "as thyself" does not vacillate in its aim, and so it enters with the condemning inflexibility of eternity into the most secret hiding place, where a man loves himself. It does not leave self-love the least excuse, the least loophole open. How strange! Long and shrewd speeches might be made about how a man ought to love his neighbor; and then, after all the speeches had been heard, self-love could still hit upon an excuse and find a way of escape, because the subject had not been absolutely exhausted; all alternatives had not been canvassed; because something had been forgotten, or not accurately and bindingly enough expressed and described.

But this "as thyself"! Certainly no wrestler can get so tight a clinch upon his opponent as that with which this commandment embraces the selfishness which cannot stir from its place. Truly, when selfishness has

striven with this word, which yet is so easy to understand that no one should break his head on it, then it must perceive that it has been striving with the stronger power. As Jacob limped after he had wrestled with God, so shall the selfishness be broken when it has striven with this word, which, however, does not wish to teach a man that he ought not to love himself, but, on the contrary, simply wishes to teach him the proper kind of self-love. How strange! What struggle is so protracted, so terrible, so complicated, as the battle of self-love in its own defense? —and yet Christianity decides everything with a single blow. The whole is swift as a handspring, everything is decided, like the eternal decision of the resurrection, "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye": Christianity presupposes that a man loves himself, and merely adds to this the word about loving your neighbor "as yourself." And yet there lies the difference of eternity between the first and the last.

But would this really be the highest form of love? Would it not be possible to love a man *better than one's self*? We hear such talk now and then, the expression of a poet's enthusiasm. Could it perhaps be true that it was because Christianity was not able to soar so high, presumably also because it addresses itself to simple, commonplace men, that it wretchedly continues to stress the requirement of loving one's neighbor "as one's self"? Could that be why, instead of basing its demand on that object of ambitious love which poets celebrate, "a beloved," "a friend," it bases it on the apparently very unpoetical "neighbor"? For certainly no poet has ever sung about loving one's neighbor, any more than he has sung about loving him "as one's self." Could this perhaps be the case? Or should we, as we make a concession to the love which the poet *sings* as compared with the love *commanded*, humbly praise the circumspection of Christianity and its understanding of life, because it holds itself to earth more soberly and more enduringly, perhaps with the same import as that of the proverb which says: "Love me little, love me long"?

Be this far from us! Christianity knows a better answer to the question of what love is and about loving than does any poet. Precisely therefore it knows too that which perhaps escapes the attention of many poets, that the love they praise is secretly self-love, and that this explains its intoxicated expression: about loving another man better than one's self. Earthly love is still not the eternal love, it is the beautiful fantasy of the infinite, its highest expression is mysterious foolishness. That is why it even tries its hand at an even more fantastic expression, the "loving a man more than God." And this foolishness pleases the poet beyond all measure, it is delicious in his ears, it inspires him to song. Alas, Christianity teaches that this is blasphemy.

And what is true of love is also true of friendship, insofar as this too

is a consequence of partiality: of loving this one man above all others, of loving him as distinct from all others. Therefore the objects of both love and friendship bear the nomenclature of this partiality, "the beloved," "the friend," who is loved above all the rest of the world. On the contrary, the Christian teaching is to love the neighbor, to love the whole race, all men, even one's enemy, and to make no exception, either of partiality or of dislike.

There is only One whom a man may with the truth of the eternal love better than himself, that is God. Therefore it does not say, "Thou shalt love God as thyself," but it says, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind." A man must love God in unconditional *obedience* and love Him in *adoration*. It would be ungodliness if any man dared to love himself in this way, or dared to love another man in this way, or dared to permit another man to love him in this way. If your beloved or your friend begged you for something which you, because you honestly loved him, had anxiously considered would be injurious to him: then a responsibility would rest upon you if you showed your love by acquiescing in his wish, instead of showing it by denying him its fulfillment. But God you must love in unconditional obedience even if that which He demands of you may seem injurious to you, moreover injurious to His own interests. For God's wisdom is incomparable with respect to your own, and God's guidance is not obliged to be responsible for your cleverness. You have only to obey in love. A man, on the contrary, you must only —yet, no, that is the highest—consequently you must love a man as yourself; if you can better perceive his best than he can, then you will not be able to excuse yourself by the fact that the harmful thing was his own wish, was what he himself asked for. If this were not the case, then there might quite rightly be something said about loving another man better than yourself; for this love would consist in: in spite of your own conviction that it would be harmful to him, *obediently* doing it because he asked it, or *adoringly*, because he wished it. But this you simply have no right to do; you are responsible if you do it, just as the other is responsible if he should misuse his relationship to you in this way.

Consequently—"as thyself." If the most cunning deceiver who has ever lived (or we may invent one even more cunning than has ever lived) in order if possible to have the right to use many words and to become long-winded, for then the deceiver would soon triumph, were to persist year out and year in inquiring "temptingly" of the "royal law," "How shall I love my neighbor?"—then will the laconic commandment unchanged continue to repeat the brief phrase, "as thyself." And if any deceiver—deceived himself all his life by all sorts of difficulties

concerning this matter, then will eternity only reprove him with the brief words of the commandment, "as thyself." Verily, no one will be able to escape the commandment; if its "as thyself" presses as hard on life as possible, so again "neighbor" is a category which in its offensiveness is as perilous to self-love as possible. That it is impossible to escape from these two categories, self-love itself readily perceives. The only escape is the one the Pharisee in his time attempted in order to justify himself: to make it doubtful who his neighbor was—in order to get him out of the way.

Who then is one's neighbor? The word is evidently derived from "nearest," so the neighbor is the one who is nearer you than all others, although not in the preferential sense; for to love the one who is preferentially nearer one than all others, is self-love—"Do not even the heathen the same?" The neighbor, then, is nearer to you than all others. But is he also nearer to you than you are to yourself? No, not so; but he is, or should be, equally near. The concept "neighbor" is really a reduplication of your own self; the "neighbor" is what philosophers would call the "other," the touchstone for testing what is selfish in self-love. Insofar, for the sake of the thought, it is not even necessary that the neighbor should exist. If a man lived on a desert island, if he developed his mind in harmony with the commandment, then by renouncing self-love he could be said to love his neighbor.

"Neighbor" is itself a multitude, for "neighbor" implies "all men," and yet in another sense one man is enough to enable you to obey the commandment. In a selfish sense it is an impossibility consciously to be two in being a self; self-love demands that it be one. Nor are three needed, for if there are two, that is, if there is one other human being whom, in the Christian sense, you love "as yourself," or in whom you love the "neighbor," then you love all men. But what the selfish definitely cannot tolerate is: duplication, and the words of the commandment, "as thyself," are exactly a duplication. One who is burning with love can never because of or by virtue of this burning, endure the reduplication which here would mean the relinquishing of love, if the object of the love required it. Consequently the lover does not love the beloved "as himself," for he is a claimant, but this "as thyself" precisely implies a claim upon him—and yet, alas, the lover still believes that he loves the other man better than himself.

"Neighbor" presses as closely as possible upon the selfishness in life. If there are only two men, the other man is the neighbor; if there are millions, each one of these is the neighbor, who is again closer to one than "the friend" and "the beloved," insofar as those, as being the objects of preferential love, gradually become analogous to the self-love in one. We are ordinarily conscious that the neighbor exists and that he

is close at hand when we believe that we have rights with regard to him, that we may claim something from him. If someone with this idea asks: Who is my neighbor? then will Christ's answer to the Pharisee be a reply only in a very peculiar sense, for in the answer the question is first really transformed into its opposite, whereby it is intimated how a man ought to ask. After having related the parable of the good Samaritan, Christ says to the Pharisees, "Which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among thieves?" And the Pharisees answer "rightly," "The one who showed mercy to him." That is, by recognizing your duty to him, you readily discover who your neighbor is. The answer of the Pharisees is implicit in Christ's question, which by its form compelled the Pharisee to answer as he did. He to whom I have an obligation is my neighbor, and when I fulfill my obligation I show that I am his neighbor. Christ does not talk about knowing one's neighbor, but about one's self being a neighbor, about proving one's self a neighbor, as the Samaritan proved himself one by his compassion. For by his compassion he did not prove that the man attacked was his neighbor, but that he was the neighbor of the one who was assaulted. The Levite and the priest were in a closer sense the neighbors of the victim, but these refused to recognize that fact; the Samaritan, on the contrary, who through prejudice might have misunderstood, still rightly understood that he was the neighbor of the man who had fallen among thieves. To choose a beloved, to find a friend, those are indeed complicated tasks, but a neighbor is easy to know, easy to find, if we will only —recognize our duty.

This was the commandment, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," but when the commandment is rightly understood, it also says the converse, "*Thou shalt love thyself in the right way.*" If anyone, therefore, will not learn from Christianity to love *himself* in the right way, then neither can he love his neighbor; he may perhaps, as we say, "for life and death"—cling to one or several other human beings, but this is by no means loving one's neighbor. To love one's self in the right way and to love one's neighbor are absolutely analogous concepts, are at bottom one and the same. When the "as thyself" of the commandment has taken from you the selfishness which Christianity, sad to say, must presuppose as existing in every human being, then you have rightly learned to love yourself. Hence the law is: "You shall love yourself as you love your neighbor when you love him as yourself." Whoever has some knowledge of men will certainly admit that as he has often wished to be able to influence men to give up their self-love, so he has also often wished that it were possible to teach them to love themselves. When the busy man wastes his time and energy on vain and unimportant projects, is this not because he has not rightly learned to love himself? When the

frivolous man abandons himself, almost as a mere nothing, to the folly of the moment, is not this because he does not rightly understand how to love himself?

When the melancholy man wishes to be done with life, aye, with himself, is this not because he will not learn strictly and earnestly to love himself? When a man, because the world or another man faithlessly betrayed him, yields himself up to despair, how was he to blame (for we are not here speaking of his innocent suffering), except for not having loved himself in the right way? When a man in self-torment thinks to do God a service by torturing himself, what is his sin except this, of not willing to love himself in the right way? Ah, and when a man presumptuously lays his hand upon himself, does not his sin precisely consist in not loving himself in the way in which a man *ought* to love himself? Oh, there is so much said in the world about treachery and faithlessness, and, God help us! this is unfortunately only too true, but let us still never forget that the most dangerous traitor of all is the one every man has in his own breast. This treachery, whether it consists in a man's selfishly loving himself, or in the fact that he selfishly does not wish to love himself in the right way, this treachery is certainly a mystery because there is no outcry about it, as is usual in cases of treachery and faithlessness. But is it not therefore all the more important that we should repeatedly be reminded about the Christian teaching: that a man should love his neighbor as himself, that is, as he ought to love himself?

The commandment about love to one's neighbor uses one and the same word, "as thyself," about this love and about the love for one's self—and now the introduction to this discourse pauses at that which it desires to make the subject of our consideration. That by which the commandment about love to one's neighbor and about love to one's self become synonymous is not only this "as thyself," but even more that word, "Thou *shalt*." It is about this that we wish to speak:

THOU *SHALT* LOVE,

for this is precisely the criterion of the Christian love and its characteristic, that it contains the apparent contradiction: that loving is a duty.

Thou *shalt* love, this is consequently the word of the "royal law." And, truly, my hearer, if you are able to form any conception of the world as it was before these words were uttered, or if you strive to understand yourself, and pay some attention to the lives and state of mind of those who, although they call themselves Christian, still really live under the categories of paganism: you will then humbly admit, with the wonder of faith, that with respect to this Christian word, as with all Christian expressions, such a commandment has not originated

in any human heart. But now since this commandment has been in force through eighteen hundred years of Christianity, and before that time in Judaism; now since everyone has been brought up in it, and from the spiritual point of view is like a child brought up in the home of well-to-do parents, who quite naturally forgets that his daily bread is a gift; now since the Christian religion has many times been rejected by those who were brought up in it, because they preferred all kinds of novelties, just as wholesome food is refused by a person who has never been hungry, in favor of sweets; now since the Christian religion is everywhere presupposed, presupposed as known, as given, as indicated—in order to go on: now it is certainly asserted as a matter of course by everyone; and yet, alas, how seldom is it considered, how seldom perhaps does a Christian earnestly and with a thankful heart dwell upon the idea of what his condition might have been if Christianity had not come into the world! What courage was not needed in order to say for the first time, "Thou *shalt* love," or rather, what divine authority was not needed in order by this word to reverse the ideas and concepts of the natural man! For there at the border line where human language pauses and courage weakens, there the revelation breaks forth with divine primitiveness and proclaims what is not difficult to understand in the sense of requiring depth of understanding or human parallels, but which nevertheless does not originate in any human heart. It is not really difficult to understand when it has been said, and it wishes only to be understood in order to be obeyed; but it does not originate in any human heart.

Let us consider a pagan who has not been spoiled by having thoughtlessly learned to repeat the Christian commandments by rote, or spoiled by imagining that he is a Christian—and this commandment, "Thou *shalt* love," will not only astonish him, but it will shock him, it will offend him. Just because of this that commandment of love, which is the Christian recognition that "all things are become new," applies again here. The commandment is not in an accidental sense something new, or in the understanding of curiosity a piece of news; nor in the sense of the temporal existence something new. Love also existed in heathendom; but the idea that love is a duty is an everlasting innovation—and everything has become new. What a difference between the play of the emotions and impulses and inclinations and passions, in short, that play of the forces of immediacy, that glory celebrated in poetry in smiles or in tears, in wishing or in need; what a difference between that and that of eternity, the earnestness of the commandment in spirit and in truth, in sincerity and self-denial!

But human ingratitude! Oh, what a short memory it has! Because the supreme good is offered to everyone, one regards it as nothing, per-

ceives nothing in it, to say nothing of really evaluating its precious quality, as if the highest really lost something through the fact that everyone has or may have the same. If a family possesses one or another costly treasure which is closely associated with a definite event, then the parents tell their children about it from generation to generation, and their children in turn tell their children how this came about. But because Christianity has for so many centuries been the possession of the whole race, must therefore all talk about what an eternal change took place in the world because of its coming, cease? Is not every generation equally near to this, that is, equally bound to make it explicit? Is the change less remarkable because it happened eighteen hundred years ago? Has it, too, become less noteworthy that a God exists, because for several thousand years generations of people have lived who believed in Him? Does it therefore become less wonderful to me—if otherwise I believe this? And is it less wonderful for one who lives in our time, eighteen hundred years later, that he became a Christian, because it is eighteen hundred years since Christianity came into the world? And even if it is not quite so long ago, then he must surely be able to remember how he was before he became a Christian, and consequently know what change took place in him—if this change consisted in his becoming a Christian. Consequently no world-historic descriptions of heathendom are needed, as if it were eighteen hundred years since the overthrow of heathendom; for it is surely not quite so long since both you, my reader, and I were heathen, were that, of course —if we now have become Christian.

For this is surely the most distressing and the most impious kind of deception, to allow one's self through ingratitude to be defrauded of the highest good which one believes one possesses, and, alas, to find that one does not possess it. For what, indeed, is the highest possession, what is the possession of everything, if I never get the right impression of my possession of it, and of what it is that I possess! Because, according to the Scriptures, he who has worldly goods should be as one who does not have them, I wonder if this is also right with respect to the supreme good: to have it and still be as one who does not have it. I wonder if that is right, yet, no, let us not be deceived by the question, as if it would be *possible* to have the supreme good in this way. Let us realize that this is truly an impossibility. The earthly goods are of no consequence, and therefore the Scriptures teach that when they are possessed they should be possessed as the unimportant; but the supreme good *cannot* and *must not* be possessed as the unimportant. Earthly goods are in an external sense *a reality*, therefore one can own them even while being as one who does not own them; but spiritual goods exist only inwardly, exist only in *being possessed*, and therefore one cannot,

if one really possesses them, be as one who does not possess them; on the contrary, if one is such, then one simply does not possess them. If someone believes that he has faith and yet is indifferent to his possession, neither cold nor warm, then he can be sure that he does not have faith. If someone believes that he is a Christian and yet is indifferent to the fact that he is, then he truly is not a Christian. Or what would we think about a man who protested that he was in love, and also stated that it was a matter of indifference to him?

So therefore let us not forget, as little now as on some other occasion when we speak about Christianity, let us not forget its beginning, that is, that it did not originate in any human heart; let us not forget to mention it along with the origin of faith, which never, when it is present in a man, believes because others have believed, but because *this* man, too, has been gripped by that which has gripped countless multitudes before him, but certainly not therefore less primitively. For a tool that a handworker uses becomes blunted through years of use, a spring loses its elasticity and is weakened; but that which has the elasticity of eternity retains it through the ages absolutely unchanged. When a dynamometer has been used a long time, at last even a weak man can pass the test; but the dynamometer of eternity, on which every man must be tested as to whether he has faith or not, remains through all the ages absolutely unchanged.

When Christ said: "Beware of men," I wonder if that warning did not also imply this: "Beware lest through men, that is, through perpetual comparison with other men, through habit and externalities, you allow yourself to be defrauded of the supreme good." For the artfulness of a deceiver is not so dangerous, besides one more easily perceives it; but to hold the supreme good in a sort of common fellowship, in the indolence of habit, moreover in the indolence of a habit which even wishes to posit the race instead of the individual, wishes to make the race the receiver, and the individual a participant as a matter of course by virtue of his belonging to the race: this is truly the terrible thing. Certainly the highest must not be mere plunder; you must not have it for yourself in a selfish sense, for what you merely have for yourself alone is never the highest good; but even if you, in the most profound sense of the word, have the highest in common with everyone else (and this is precisely what makes it the highest, that you can have it in common with all others), you must still have it for yourself in such a way that you keep it, not only when everyone else has it, but so that you retain it even if all others renounce it. Beware in this respect also of men, "be as wise as serpents"—in order to preserve the secret of faith for yourself, although you hope and wish and labor to make everyone in this respect like yourself. "Be innocent as doves," for faith is

exactly this simplicity. You must not use your ingenuity for the purpose of making faith into something else, but you must use it ingeniously toward men to defend the secret of faith within yourself, guarding yourself against men. Is a password not a secret because everyone knows it individually, because it is confided to everyone and kept secret by everyone? However, the secret password is one thing today and another tomorrow. But the essence of faith consists in its being a secret, in being for the individual. If each individual does not preserve it as a secret, even when he professes it, he does not have faith. Could it be because there is something lacking in faith that it thus is and remains and must be preserved as a secret? Is this not also true of love, or is it just one of those fugitive emotions which manifest themselves immediately, and as quickly disappear, while the profound impression always preserves its secrecy? If that is so, then we are still right in saying that the love which does not make a man secretive is not really love.

That secretive love can be a symbol of faith; but the incorruptible inwardness of faith in the hidden man is life. He who wise as a serpent is on guard against men, so that harmless as a dove he may "preserve the secret of faith," has also, as the Scriptures say, "the savor in himself"; but if he is not on guard against men, then the salt loses its virtue, and how then can it be salt? And even if it happened that a secret love became the cause of a man's downfall, still faith is eternally and always the saving mystery! Behold that woman with the issue of blood; she did not press forward in order to happen to touch Christ's garment; she did not tell others what her intention was and what she believed: she said quite softly to herself: "If I only touch the hem of His garment, then am I healed." She kept the secret to herself, it was the secret of faith, which saved her both for time and eternity. This secret you may also have for yourself if you fearlessly profess faith; and when you lie helpless on a sickbed and cannot even move a limb, when you cannot even speak, you can still keep this secret with you.

But the primitiveness of faith is related to the beginning of Christianity. Extravagant descriptions of heathendom, its errors, its characteristics, are by no means needed; the signs of the Christlike are contained in Christianity itself. Make an experiment; forget for a moment Christian love, consider what you know about other love, recall what you read in the poets, what you yourself can discover, and then say whether it ever occurred to you to conceive this: Thou *shalt* love. Be honest, or, that this may not embarrass you, I shall honestly confess that many, many times in my life it has awakened all my astonishment of wonder, that it has sometimes seemed to me as if love lost everything by this comparison, although it gains everything. Be honest, confess that this is perhaps the case with many people, that when they

read the poets' glowing descriptions of love or friendship, these seem to them something far higher than the humble: "Thou *shalt* love."

"Thou shalt love." *Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly secure against every change; everlastingly emancipated in blessed independence; everlastingly happy, assured against despair.*

However glad, however happy, however indescribably confident the love of impulse and inclination, the immediate love as such can be, it still feels, even in its most beautiful moment, a need to bind itself if possible even more closely. Therefore the two take an oath; they take an oath of loyalty or friendship to each other; and when we speak most solemnly, we do not say about the two, "They love one another," we say, "They swore fidelity to each other," or, "They took an oath of friendship to each other." But by what does this love swear? We do not wish to distract the attention and divert it by recalling the great distinction which the spokesmen of this love, the "poets," through their consecration know best about—for in respect to this love it is the poet who exacts a promise from the two, the poet who unites the two, the poet who dictates an oath to the two and lets them take it, in short, it is the poet who is the priest. Does this love then swear by something that is higher than itself? No, it does not. This is what exactly constitutes the beautiful, the moving, the mysterious, the poetical misunderstanding, that the two do not themselves discover it; and precisely because of this, the poet is their only, their beloved confidant, because neither does he discover it.

When this love takes an oath, it really gives itself that significance by which it swears; it is the love itself which casts a glamor over that by which it swears, so it consequently not only does not swear by anything higher but it really swears by something lower than itself. So indescribably rich is this love in its loving misunderstanding; for just because it is itself an infinite wealth, a limitless trustworthiness, it happens that when it wishes to take an oath it swears by something lower, but it does not even discover this. That is why it again happens that this oath which certainly should be and which also honestly believes itself to be supremely serious, is still the most charming jest. And neither does the mysterious friend, the poet whose perfect confidence is this love's supreme understanding, understand it. Still it is certainly easy to understand, that if one will swear in truth then one must swear by something higher; only God in heaven is truly in a position to swear by Himself. However, the poet cannot understand this, that is, the individual who is a poet can understand it, but he cannot understand it insofar as he is poet, since "the poet" cannot understand it; for the poet

can understand everything—in riddles, and can wonderfully explain everything—in riddles, but he cannot understand himself, or understand that he himself is a riddle. Should he be forced to understand that, then would he, if he did not become enraged and resentful, say sadly: "Would that no one had forced this comprehension upon me, which disturbs that which is most beautiful, which confuses my life, while I can make no use of it." And so far the poet is right, for the true understanding solves the vital question of his existence. There are in this way two riddles, the first is the love of the two, the second is the poet's explanation of it, or that the poet's explanation of it is also a riddle.

So this love takes an oath, and then the two add to the oath that they will love each other "forever." If this is not added, then the poet does not unite the two; he turns indifferently away from such a temporal love, or he turns mockingly against it, whereas he forever belongs to that eternal love. There are then really two unions, first, the two who will love each other forever, and then the poet who will forever belong to those two. And in that the poet is right, that if two men will not love each other forever, then their love is not worth talking about, and certainly not worth celebrating in verse. On the other hand, the poet does not notice the misunderstanding that the two swear *by their love* to love each other forever, instead of swearing their love to each other by *eternity*. Eternity is the higher; if one wishes to take an oath, then must one swear by the higher, but if one will swear by the eternal, then one swears by the *duty of loving*. Alas, but that favorite of lovers, the poet! Even more seldom than the two true lovers is he himself the lover for whom he longs, he who is a marvel of lovableness. He is like the affectionate child, he cannot endure hearing this "shalt"; as soon as it is said to him, he either becomes impatient, or he bursts into tears.

Hence, this immediate love contains the eternal in the form of a beautiful fantasy, but it is not consciously grounded on the eternal, and therefore it can be *changed*. Even if it does not change, it still retains the possibility of change, for it depends on good fortune. But if what is true of fortune is true about happiness, which if we think of the eternal cannot be considered without sadness, it is like saying with a shudder: "Happiness *is*, when it *has been*." That is, as long as it existed, or was existing, a change was possible; only when it is past can one say that it existed. "Call no man happy as long as he is living"; as long as he is living his fortune may change; only when he is dead, and happiness had not forsaken him while he lived, can one know that he—had been happy. What merely exists, what has suffered no change, always has the possibility of change outside itself. Change is always possible; even at the last moment it may come, and not until life is finished can one say:

"The change did not come"—or perhaps it did come. That which has suffered no change certainly has *continuance*, but it does not have *immutability*. Insofar as it has continuance it exists, but insofar as it has gained immutability through change, it cannot become contemporaneous with itself, and then it is either happily unconscious of this disproportion, or it is inclined to sadness. For the eternal is the only thing which can be and become and continue contemporaneously with every age. On the other hand, temporal existence is divisive in itself, and the present cannot be contemporaneous with the future, or the future with the past, or the past with the present. As to that which by undergoing change gained immutability, one cannot merely say, when it has existed, "It existed," but one can say, "It has existed while it existed." Just this is what affords the security, and it is an entirely different relation from that of happiness. When love has undergone the change of eternity through having become duty, then it has gained immutability, and it follows as a matter of course that it exists. It is not a matter of course that what exists at this moment also exists the next moment, but it is a matter of course that the immutable exists.

We say that something has stood the test, and we praise it when it has met the test. But we are still talking about the imperfect, for the immutability of the immutable *will* not and *can* not become apparent by undergoing a test—for it is immutable, and only the perishable can give itself the appearance of immutability by meeting a test. That is why it would never occur to anyone to say about sterling silver that it will stand the test of years, because it is sterling silver. So too with love. The love which merely has continuance, however happy, however blissful, however confident, however poetic it is, must still stand the testing of the years; but the love which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, won immutability; it is sterling.

Is this love which underwent the change of eternity therefore less practicable, less useful in life? Is sterling silver less useful? Surely not; but language involuntarily and thought consciously honors sterling silver in a characteristic way, for one merely says of this that "one uses it." There is simply nothing said about testing it; one does not insult it by wishing to test it, for one knows already that sterling silver stands the test. Therefore if one uses a less reliable product, then one is compelled to be more tactless and to speak less simply; one is compelled to speak almost ambiguously, to say two things, that "one uses it and while he uses it, he is also testing it," for it is always possible that it might change.

Consequently, *only when love is a duty, only then is love eternally secure*. This security of eternity drives out all anxiety and makes love perfect, perfectly secure. For in that love which only has continuance,

however confident it is, there is still an anxiety, an anxiety about the possibility of change. It does not itself understand, as little as does the poet, that it is anxiety; for the anxiety is hidden, and there is only the burning desire for the expression of love, which is just the admission that anxiety lies at the bottom. How otherwise does it happen that the immediate love is so inclined to, moreover, so enamored with the idea of putting love to the test? This is just because love has not, through becoming duty, in the deepest sense undergone the "test." Hence this, which the poet would call sweet unrest, wishes more and more rashly to make the test. The lover would test the beloved, friend would test the friend; the testing no doubt is based on love, but this violently burning desire to test, this wishful craving to put love to the test, nevertheless testifies that the love itself is unconsciously insecure. Here again is a mysterious misunderstanding in the immediate love and in the explanations of the poet. The lover and the poet think that this desire to test love is simply an expression for how certain it is. But is this really true? It is absolutely true that one does not care to test what is unimportant; but from that it does not follow that wishing to test the beloved expresses confidence. The two love each other, they love each other forever, they are so certain of this that they—put it to the test. Is this the highest certainty? Is not the relation here precisely what it is when love takes an oath and yet swears by what is lower than love? So here the highest expression of the lovers for the constancy of their love is an expression of the fact that it merely has existence, for one tests that which merely has existence, one puts it to the test.

But when it is a duty to love, there no test is needed and the insulting stupidity of wishing to test is superfluous; since love is higher than any proof, it has already more than met the test, in the same sense as faith "more than conquers." The very fact of testing always conditions a possibility; it is still always possible that that which is tested may not meet the test. Hence if someone wished to test whether he has faith, or tried to get faith, then this would really mean that he will hinder himself in acquiring faith; he will become a victim of the restless craving where faith is never won, for "thou *shalt* believe." If a believer were to implore God to put his faith to the test, then this is not an indication of the believer's having faith to an extraordinary degree (to think that is a poetic misunderstanding, as it is also a misunderstanding to have faith to an "extraordinary" degree, since the ordinary degree of faith is the highest), but it indicates that he does not quite have faith, for "thou *shalt* believe." There is no higher assurance, and the repose of eternity is never found anywhere but in this "shalt." However attractive it may be, "testing" is a disquieting thought, and it is anxiety which would make you imagine that the testing constitutes a

higher assurance; for the idea of testing is in itself ingenious and inexhaustible, just as human wisdom has never been able to reckon all the chances, while, on the contrary, as earnestness so excellently says, "Faith has taken all chances into account." And if one *must*, then it is eternally decided; and if you are willing to understand that you *must* love, then is your love eternally secure.

And love is also through this "shalt" eternally secure *against every change*. For the love which merely has continuance can be changed, it can be changed *in itself*, and it can be changed *from itself*.

The immediate love can be changed in itself, it can be changed into its opposite, into *hate*. Hate is a love which has become its opposite, a love which has perished. At bottom love burns constantly, but the flame is that of hate; only when the love is burnt out is the flame of hate also quenched. As it is said about the tongue, that "out of the same mouth proceedeth both blessing and cursing," so we must also say that it is the same love which loves and hates; but just because it is the same love, precisely therefore, it is not in the eternal sense the true love, which *remains the same and unchanged*, while that immediate love, if *it is changed*, at bottom is still *the same*. The true love which underwent the change of the eternal by becoming duty, is never changed; it is simple, it loves—and never hates, never hates—the beloved. It might seem as if the immediate love were the stronger because it can do two things, because it can *both* love *and* hate; it might seem as if it had a quite different power over its object when it says, "If you will not love me, then I will hate you": still this is only an illusion. For is the changed really a stronger power than the unchangeable? And who is the stronger, the one who says, "If you will not love me, then I will hate you," or the one who says, "Even if you hate me I shall continue to love you"? Moreover, it is certainly terrifying and terrible that love should be changed into hate; but I wonder for whom it is really terrible; is it not for the one to whom it happened that his love was changed to hate?

The immediate love can undergo a change; it can spontaneously become *jealousy*, can change from the greatest happiness into the greatest agony. So dangerous is the heat of this immediate love, however great its desire is, so dangerous, that this heat can easily become a sickness. The immediate love is like fermentation, which is so-called just because it has still undergone no change, and therefore has not yet separated out from itself the poison which at the same time furnishes the heat of the fermentation. If love sets itself on fire through this poison, instead of separating it out, then comes jealousy; and, alas! the word itself indicates a desire to become sick, a sickness of desire [*Iver*—desire, *Sygdom*—sickness; hence *Iversyge*, desire-sickness, or jeal-

ousy]. The jealous person does not hate the object of love, far from it, but he tortures himself with the fire of reciprocated love, which sanctifyingly ought to purify his love. The jealous lover intercepts, almost imploringly, every ray of love from the beloved, but he focuses all these rays upon his own love through the burning glass of his jealousy, and he is slowly consumed. On the other hand, the love which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, knows no jealousy; it loves, not only as it is loved, but it loves. Jealousy loves as it is loved; in jealous agony about whether it is loved, it is as equally jealous for its own love, whether it may not be disproportionate to the other's indifference, as it is jealous for the expression of the other's love; anxiously tortured in its self-occupation, it neither dares to believe the beloved absolutely nor to resign itself absolutely, lest it give too much, and therefore it is always burning itself, as one burns himself on that which is not hot—except to the alarmed touch. It is comparable to spontaneous combustion. It might seem as if there would be quite a different kind of fire in the immediate love, since it can become jealousy; but, alas, this fire is just the appalling thing about it. It might seem as if jealousy held its object fast in quite a different way when it watches over it with a hundred eyes, while simple love has, as it were, but a single eye for its love. But I wonder if dispersion is stronger than unity. I wonder if a heart wrenched asunder is stronger than one perfect and undivided. I wonder if a perpetually grasping anxiety holds its object closer than the united forces of simplicity! And how does that simple love assure itself against jealousy? I wonder if it is not by virtue of the fact that it does not love in a comparative way. It does not begin by immediately loving preferentially, it loves; therefore it can never love morbidly in a comparative way—it loves.

The immediate love can be changed *from itself*, it can be changed by the years, as is so often seen. Then love loses its ardor, its gladness, its desire, its primitiveness, the freshness of its life; like the river which sprang out of the rock when it later on spreads out in the sluggishness of stagnant water, so love is weakened by the lukewarmness and indifference of habit. Alas, perhaps of all enemies force of habit is the most crafty, and above all it is crafty enough never to let itself be seen, for one who sees the habit is saved from habit. Habit is not like other enemies which one sees and against which one strives to defend himself; the struggle is really with one's self in getting to see it. In its cunning it is like that familiar beast of prey, the vampire bat, which stealthily falls upon its sleeping victim; while it sucks his blood, its gently moving wings waft the coolness over him, and make his slumber even more refreshing. Such is habit—or it is even worse; for that animal seeks its prey among the sleeping, but it has no means of sooth-

ing the waking to sleep. Habit, on the contrary, has this power; it creeps soporifically upon a man, and when he has fallen asleep, then it sucks his blood, whilst it wafts the coolness over him and makes his sleep even more delicious.

So the immediate love can be changed from itself and become unrecognizable—for hate and jealousy are still perceptible in the love. So a man himself sometimes notices, as when a dream floats by and is forgotten, that habit has changed him; then he wishes to make good again, but he does not know where he can go to buy new oil to enkindle his love. Then he becomes despondent, irritated, bored by himself, bored by his love, bored by the wretchedness of things as they are, bored by the fact that he cannot change them; alas, for he had not paid attention in time to the change of eternity, and now he has even lost the power to endure the healing.

Oh, we sometimes see with sorrow the impoverishment of a man who once lived in affluence, and yet how much more distressing than this change it is to see love changed into something almost abhorrent! —If, on the contrary, love has undergone the change of eternity by becoming duty, then it does not know the force of habit, then habit can never get power over it. As it is said of the eternal life, that there is neither sighing nor weeping, so we might add that there is also no habit; and thereby we truly are not saying anything less excellent. If you wish to save your soul or your love from the perfidy of habit—moreover men believe that there are many ways of keeping themselves awake and safe, but truly there is but one: eternity's "shalt." Let the thunder of a hundred cannon three times a day remind you to resist the thraldom of habit; keep, as did that mighty Eastern emperor, a slave who daily reminds you, keep a hundred; have a friend who reminds you every time he sees you, have a wife who reminds you early and late in love: but watch yourself lest this too becomes a habit! For you can become accustomed to the thunder of a hundred cannon, so that you can sit at table and hear the most insignificant remark more clearly than the roar of the hundred cannon you are—in the habit of hearing. And you can become accustomed to having a hundred slaves remind you every day, so that you no longer listen, because through habit you have developed an ear wherewith you hear and yet do not hear. No, only the "thou shalt" of eternity—and the listening ear which will hear this "thou shalt," can save you from the thraldom of habit. Habit is the most distressing change, and, on the other hand, one can accustom one's self to every change; only the eternal, and consequently that which underwent the change of eternity through becoming duty, are the unchangeable, but the unchangeable can never become habit. However firmly a habit is fixed, it never becomes unchangeable, even if a man remains

incorrigible; for habit is constantly that which *should be changed*; the unchangeable, on the contrary, is that which neither *can* nor *should* be changed. But the eternal never becomes old and never becomes habit.

Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly free in blessed independence. But is, then, that immediate love not free; does not the lover enjoy freedom in his love? And, on the other hand, could it be the intention of the discourse to recommend the desolate independence of self-love, which became independent because it did not have the courage to bind itself, and hence became dependent on its cowardice; the desolate independence which vacillates because it found no place of refuge, and is like "the one who wanders hither and thither, an armed brigand, who puts up wherever evening finds him"; the desolate independence which independently will not endure fetters—at least not visible ones? Oh, far from it; on the contrary, we have in the preceding discourse reminded you that the expression for the greatest wealth is to have a need; and this is also the true expression of freedom, that it is a need in the free. He in whom love is a necessity certainly feels free in his love; and just the one who feels himself so dependent on his love that he would lose everything in losing the beloved, just he is independent. Yet on one condition, that he does not confuse love with the possession of the beloved. If one were to say, "Either love or die," and thereby meant that a life without love was not worth living, then we should admit that he was absolutely right. But if by this he meant possessing the beloved, and consequently meant, either possess the beloved or die, either gain this friend or die, then we must say that such a love is dependent in a false sense. When love does not make the same demands upon itself as it makes on the object of its love, while it is still dependent on that love, then it is dependent in a false sense; the law of its existence lies outside itself, and hence it is dependent in the corruptible, earthly, temporal sense. But the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, and loves because it *must* love, it is independent; it has the law of its existence in the relation of love itself to the eternal. This love can never become in a false sense dependent, for the only one it is dependent upon is duty, and duty is the only emancipating power. Immediate love makes a man free one moment, and in the next moment dependent. It is like a man's coming into existence; by existing, by becoming a "self," he becomes free, but in the next moment he is dependent on this self. Duty, on the other hand, makes a man dependent and at the same time eternally independent. "Only the law can give freedom." Alas, we often think that freedom exists, and that it is the law which restricts freedom. However, it is just the other way; without law freedom simply does not exist, and it is the law which gives freedom. We think, too, that it is the law which makes distinctions, because

where there is no law there are no distinctions. Still it is the other way; when it is the law which makes the distinction, then it is exactly the law which makes everyone equal before the law.

Thus this "shalt" sets love free in blessed independence; such a love stands and falls not by some accidental circumstance of its object, it stands and falls by the law of eternity—but then it never falls; such a love does not depend upon this or that, it depends only on—the one liberating force, consequently it is eternally independent. There is nothing comparable to this independence. Sometimes the world praises the proud independence which believes it feels no need of being loved, although it also thinks that it "needs other men, not to be loved by them, but in order to love, in order to have someone to love." Oh, how false is not this independence! It feels no *need* to be loved, and yet it *needs* someone to love; consequently it needs another man—in order to be able to satisfy its proud self-esteem. Is not this as when vanity believes that it can dispense with the world, and yet needs the world, that is, it needs that the world should become conscious of the fact that its vanity does not need the world! But the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, certainly feels a need of being loved, and this need together with this "shalt" is therefore an eternally harmonious concord; but it can do without this love, if so it *must* be, while it still continues to love: is this not independence? This independence is dependent only on love itself through the "shalt" of eternity; it is not dependent on anything else, and therefore it is not dependent on love's object as soon as this appears to be something else. However, this does not indicate that the independent love then ceased, transformed itself into a proud self-satisfaction; that is dependence. No, love abides, it is independence. The unchangeableness is the true independence; every change, be it the swoon of weakness or the arrogance of pride, the sighing or the self-satisfied, is dependence. If one man, when another man says to him, "I can no longer love you," proudly answers, "Then I can also stop loving you": is this independence? Alas, it is only dependence, for the fact as to whether he will continue to love or not depends on whether the other will love. But the one who answers, "Then I *will* still continue to love you," his love is everlastingly free in blessed independence. He does not say it proudly—dependent on his pride; no, he says it humbly, humbling himself under the "shalt" of eternity, and just for that reason he is independent.

Only when it is a duty to love, only then is love everlastingly secured against despair. Immediate love can become unhappy, can come to despair. Again, it might seem an expression for the strength of love, that it has the energy of despair, but this is only an appearance; for the energy of despair, however much it is recommended, is still impotence,

its highest possibility is just its own destruction. Still, the fact that the immediate love can reach despair, shows that it is despairing, that even when it is happy, it loves with the energy of despair—loves another man "better than himself, better than God." About despair it must be said: only he can despair who is desperate. When immediate love despairs over unhappiness, then it merely becomes evident that it was—desperate, that in its happiness it had also been desperate. Despair consists in laying hold on an individual with infinite passion; for unless one is desperate, one can lay hold only on the eternal with infinite passion. Immediate love *is* thus desperate; but when it becomes happy, as we say, it is hidden from it that it is desperate, when it becomes unhappy it becomes evident that it—was desperate. On the other hand, the love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, can never despair, just because it *is* not desperate. Despair is, namely, not something which may happen to a man, an event like fortune and misfortune. Despair is a disproportion in his inmost being—so far down, so deep, that neither fate nor events can encroach upon it, but can only reveal the fact that the disproportion—was there. Therefore there is only one assurance against despair: to undergo the change of eternity by the "shalt" of duty; anyone who has not understood this change *is* desperate; fortune and prosperity may conceal it; misfortune and adversity, on the contrary, do not, as he thinks, make him desperate, but they reveal the fact that he—was desperate. Insofar as we speak otherwise, it is because we frivolously confuse the highest concepts. That which really makes a man despair is not misfortune, but it is the fact that he lacks the eternal; despair is to lack the eternal; despair consists in not having undergone the change of eternity by duty's "shalt." Consequently despair is not the loss of the beloved, that is misfortune, pain, suffering; but despair is the lack of the eternal.

How then is the love enjoined by the commandment assured against despair? Quite simply, through the commandment, through this, "Thou shalt love." It consists first and foremost in the fact that you must not love in such a way that the loss of the beloved would reveal the fact that you were desperate, that is, that you simply must not love despairingly. Does this mean that it is forbidden to love? By no means; that would indeed be a strange speech if the commandment which says "Thou shalt love," should by its command forbid one to love. Hence the commandment merely forbids loving in a way which is not commanded; essentially the commandment does not forbid but commands that thou shalt love. Hence the commandment of love does not assure against despair by means of weak, lukewarm grounds of comfort, that one must not take things too seriously, and all that. And truly is such a wretched wisdom, which "has ceased to sorrow," any less despairing than the

despair of the lover, is it not rather an even worse form of despair! No, the commandment of love forbids despair—by commanding one to love. Who would have the courage to say this except eternity? Who is prepared to speak this "shalt" except eternity who, at the very moment when love would despair over its unhappiness, commands it to love? Where can this commandment arise except in eternity? For when it becomes impossible to possess the beloved in the temporal existence, then eternity says, "Thou shalt love," that is, eternity saves love from despairing just by making it eternal. Suppose it is death which separates the two—when the one left would sink in despair: where then can he find help? Temporal consolation is an even more distressing kind of despair; but then eternity helps. When it says, "Thou shalt love," then in saying that it says, "Thy love hath an everlasting validity." But it does not say this consolingly, for that would not help; it says it commandingly, just because there is something wrong. And when eternity says, "Thou shalt love," then it assumes the responsibility for guaranteeing that it can be done. Oh, what is all other consolation compared with that of eternity, what is all other deep-felt sorrow against that of eternity! If one would speak more gently and say, "Take comfort," then the sorrowing would have objections ready; but—moreover, it is not because the eternal will proudly brook no objection—out of solicitude for the sorrowful, it commands, "Thou shalt love."

Wonderful consolation! Wonderful compassion! For, humanly speaking, it is indeed the strangest thing, almost like mockery, to say to the despairing that he *ought* to do that which would be his sole wish, but the impossibility of which reduces him to despair. Is there any other proof needed that the commandment of love is of divine origin? If you have tried it, or if you do try it, go to such a sorrowing one at the very moment when the loss of the beloved threatens to overwhelm him, and see then what you can find to say; confess that you wish to console him; the only thing it will not occur to you to say is, "Thou shalt love." And, on the other hand, see if this does not, as soon as it is said, almost embitter the sorrowing, because it seems the most unsuitable thing to say on this occasion. Oh, but you who had the bitter experience, you who at the hard moment found human consolation empty and annoying—without consolation; you who with terror discovered that not even the admonition of the eternal could keep you from sinking down: you learned to love this "shalt" which saves from despair! What you perhaps have often verified in minor situations, that true edification is, strictly speaking, that which taught you in the most profound sense: that only this "shalt" forever happily saves from despair. Eternally happy—aye, for only that one is saved from despair who is *eternally* saved from despair. The love which underwent the change of eternity by becoming duty, is

not exempt from unhappiness, but it is saved from despair, in fortune and misfortune, equally saved from despair.

Lo, passion excites, earthly wisdom cools, but neither this heat nor this coolness, nor the blending of the heat and coolness is the pure air of the eternal. There is in this heat something ardent, and in this coolness something sharp, and in the blending of the two something indefinite, or an unconscious deceitfulness, as in the hazardous season of spring. But this "Thou *shalt* love" takes away all the unsoundness and preserves the soundness for eternity. Thus it is everywhere; this "shalt" of eternity is the saving, the purifying, the ennobling. Sit with one who is in deep sorrow; you may soothe for a moment if you have the ability to give expression to the passion of despair as not even the sorrowing is able to do; but it is still false comfort. It may for a moment tempt refreshingly, if you have the wisdom and the experience to afford a temporary outlook where the sorrowing sees none; but it is still false comfort. On the other hand, this "Thou shalt sorrow" is both true and beautiful. I have no right to harden my heart against the pain of life, for I *must* sorrow; but neither have I the right to despair, for I *must* sorrow; and yet neither have I the right to cease to sorrow, for I *must* sorrow. So also with love. You have no right to harden yourself against this emotion, for thou *shalt* love; but neither have you the right to love despairingly for thou *shalt* love; and just as little have you the right to corrupt this feeling in you, for thou *shalt* love. You must preserve the love and you must preserve yourself, and in preserving yourself preserve your love. There where the purely human would rush forth, the commandment retards; there where the purely human would lose courage, the commandment strengthens; there where the purely human would become weary and prudent, the commandment enkindles and gives wisdom. The commandment consumes and burns up the unsoundness in your love, but through the commandment you will again be able to enkindle it, when humanly speaking it would cease. There where you think yourself easily able to advise, there you must take the commandment for counsel; there where you despairingly would direct yourself, there you must take the commandment for your counselor; but there where you do not know how to advise, there will the commandment give counsel, so that all is well.

II

B. THOU SHALT LOVE THY *NEIGHBOR*

IT IS the Christian love which discovers and knows that the neighbor exists, and, what amounts to the same thing, that everyone is a neighbor. If it were not a duty to love, then the concept of neighbor would not exist; but only when one loves one's neighbor, only then is the selfish partiality eradicated, and the equality of the eternal preserved.

The objection is frequently raised against Christianity, although in various ways and moods and with varying passions and purposes, that it supplants earthly love and friendship. Then again, some have wished to defend Christianity, and for this purpose have appealed to its teaching that one must love God with all his heart and his neighbor as himself. If the dispute is carried on in this way, it becomes fairly indifferent whether one disputes or agrees, inasmuch as a battle in the air and an agreement in the air are equally insignificant. Rather one must see how to make the issue really clear, in order to admit in its defense with all calmness, that Christianity has pushed earthly love and friendship from the throne, the impulsive and the preferential love, the partiality, in order to set spiritual love in its place, the love to one's neighbor, a love which in earnestness and truth and inwardness is more tender than any earthly love—in the union, and more faithfully sincere than the most celebrated friendship—in concord. Rather one must see, to make it really clear, that the praise of earthly love and friendship belongs to paganism, that "the poet" really belongs to paganism, since his task belongs there—in order then by the steadfast spirit of conviction to give Christianity what belongs to Christianity, love for the neighbor, of which love paganism had no conception. Rather one must see how rightly to make the division, in order, if possible, to give the individual occasion to choose, rather than to confuse and jumble, thereby hindering the individual from getting a definite impression of which is which. And, above all, one must have done with defending Christianity rather than consciously or unconsciously wishing to maintain everything—including the non-Christian.

Everyone who considers this matter with earnestness and insight will readily see that the point at issue must be posited thus: shall earthly love and friendship be love's highest expression, or shall this love be set aside? Earthly love and friendship are related to passion; but all passion, whether it attacks or defends itself, fights only in one way: either-or: "Either I exist and am the highest, or I do not exist at all, either all or nothing." The bungler and the confused (whom paganism and the poet are just as much against as is Christianity) advance the

idea, when it comes to defense, that Christianity doubtless teaches a higher love, but that it *also* recommends earthly love and friendship. To speak in this way betrays the double-mindedness: that the speaker has neither the soul of a poet nor the spirit of Christianity. Concerning the spiritual relation one cannot—if he wishes to avoid speaking foolishly—talk like a shopkeeper who has a best quality of goods, but also an intermediate quality which he *also* ventures to recommend as very good, as almost equally good. No, if it is certain that Christianity teaches that love to God and the neighbor is the true love, then it is also certain that He who has put down "all high things which exalted themselves against the knowledge of God, and has taken every thought captive in obedience," has also thrust down earthly love and friendship. Would it not be strange if Christianity were as bungling and confused a teaching as many a defense wishes to make it, very frequently worse than any attack? Would it not be strange that there is nowhere found in the New Testament a single word about love in the sense in which the poet sings it and paganism idolized it? Would it not be strange that nowhere in the New Testament is there found a single word about friendship used in the sense in which the poet celebrates it and paganism exalted it? Or let the poet who recognizes himself as being a poet, go through what the New Testament teaches about earthly love, and he will be brought to the point of despair because he will not find one single word which might inspire him—and if any so-called poet still found a word which he might use, then is this a mendacious use, a dishonest use, because instead of reverencing Christianity, he steals a precious word and perverts its use. Let the poet search through the New Testament to find a word concerning friendship which may please him, and he will search in vain to the point of despair. But let a Christian, who wishes to love his neighbor, seek; truly he will not search in vain, he will find each word stronger and more authoritative than the other, useful to him in enkindling this love and preserving him in this love.

The poet will seek in vain. But is the poet then not a Christian? We have certainly not said that, nor do we say it; we only say that insofar as he is poet, he is not Christian. Still there must be a distinction made, for there are also godly poets. But these do not sing of earthly love and friendship; their songs are to the glory of God, about faith and hope and love. Those poets do not sing of love in the same sense as the poet sings of earthly love, for the love to one's neighbor is not sung, it is acted. Even if there were nothing else which prevented the poet from celebrating the love for one's neighbor in poetry, this is still sufficient to hinder him, that by the side of every word in the Sacred Book there stands before him in invisible writing a disturbing note, for it says:

"Go thou and do likewise"—does this sound like a poetic appeal, inviting him to sing?

Hence with the religious poet it is an individual matter, but of the worldly poet it holds good that insofar as he is poet, he is not Christian. And yet it is the worldly poets of whom we think when we speak of the poet in general. That the poet lives in Christendom makes no difference. Whether *he* is a Christian is not incumbent on us to decide, but insofar as he is poet he is not Christian. It might certainly seem that since Christianity has now existed so long, it must by now have penetrated every relationship—and all of us. But this is an illusion. And because Christianity has existed so long, that is certainly not saying that we have lived as long, or have so long been Christian. The poet's existence in Christendom and the position which is conceded him (for rudeness and envious assaults upon him are certainly not *Christian* objections or arguments against his existence) are an earnest reminder about how much was received earlier, and about how easily we are tempted to imagine ourselves to be far in advance of ourselves. Alas! for while the Christian preaching is sometimes scarcely listened to, all listen to the poet, admire him, learn from him, are charmed by him. Alas! while one swiftly forgets what the preacher has said, how accurately and for how long a time does not one remember what the poet has said, especially when he has enlisted the aid of an actor! These remarks in no way suggest that the poet should be done away with, perhaps by force; for thereby we should only gain a new illusion. What would it avail to have no poets, if there were still so many in Christendom who were satisfied with the understanding of existence which the poet commands; so many who long for the poet! Nor is it asked of the Christian that in blind and doubtful zeal he should carry it to the point that he could no longer bear to read a poet—any more than it is required of the Christian that he should not eat the food customary for others, or that he should live apart from other men in a separate enclosure. No, but the Christian must understand everything in a different way from the non-Christian; he must understand himself in knowing how to make distinctions. A man would no more be able to live exclusively according to the highest Christian concepts all the time than he would be able to live by eating only at the Lord's table. Therefore, let the poet exist, let the individual poet be admired as he deserves, if he really is a poet, but also let the individual in Christendom prove his Christian conviction by means of this test: how he regards the poet, what he thinks about him, how he reads him, how he admires him. However, there is rarely anything said about such matters in these times.

To many, unfortunately, these reflections will perhaps seem neither sufficiently Christian nor sufficiently earnest, just because they deal with

those things which, it is well to note, occupy men so much six days of the week, and even on the seventh day absorb more hours than do godly matters. However, we trust—both because we have been instructed and trained in Christianity from childhood, and also because in our mature years we dedicated our days and our best efforts to this service, although, as we have repeatedly said, our speech is "without authority" —we trust that we know what should be said in these times and how to say it. We have all been baptized and instructed in Christianity, consequently there is nothing to say about disseminating it. Far be it from us, on the other hand, to judge that anyone who says he is a Christian, is not; hence there is nothing to say about the professing Christian in contradistinction to the non-Christian. On the contrary, it is very profitable and necessary that the individual should carefully and conscientiously give heed to himself, and if possible help others (insofar as one man can help another, for God is the true helper) to a more and more profound understanding of what it means to become a Christian. The word "Christendom" as a general appellation for an entire people is a superscription which may easily say too much, and therefore may easily cause the individual to believe too much about himself. It is customary, at least in other places, to place signposts on the highway to indicate where the road leads. Perhaps at the very moment a man sets out on a journey he sees a signpost that says that this road leads to that distant place which is his own destination: has he therefore reached that place? So is it, too, with this guidepost, Christianity. It indicates the direction, but has one therefore reached the goal, or is one always merely—on the way? Or is it really progressing on the road if, for a single hour once a week, a man walks along this way, while the other six days he lives in absolutely different conceptions, and meanwhile makes no effort himself to understand how this can be consistent?

And is this really earnestness: to keep silent about the true state of the case and the conditions, in order to speak with extreme earnestness about the more earnest matters, which nevertheless might well be omitted in the confusion, whose relation to this earnestness one—from sheer earnestness—does not explain? Who then has the more difficult task, the teacher who lectures on earnestness as something at a meteoric distance from daily affairs, or the disciple who wishes to make an application of this explanation? Is only that a deception: the keeping silent about what is earnest? Is it not an equally dangerous deception to mention it—but under circumstances, and to present it—but in a light totally different from the daily life of actuality? If it is true that the entire worldly life, its splendors, its diversions, its enchantments, can captivate and ensnare a man in so many ways, which then is earnestness: either, out of—sheer earnestness to keep silent in church about worldly matters, or to speak seriously about them in order, if possible, to strengthen men

against worldly dangers? Would it really be impossible to speak about worldly matters in a solemn and truly serious manner? And if it were impossible, does it therefore follow that the godly address should keep silent about them? Ah, no, it would only follow that it should be prohibited in the godly address on the more solemn occasions.

Consequently we shall test the Christian conviction of the poet. What does the poet teach about earthly love and friendship? Here it is not a question about this or that particular poet, but only about the poet, that is, only about him insofar as he, as poet, is true to himself and his task. Thus, if a so-called poet has lost faith in the poetic validity of love and friendship, and in its conceptions, and has posited something else in its place, then he is not a poet, and, perhaps *that* other thing that he posits instead, is also not Christian, but sheer bungling. Earthly love is based on an impulse which, explained as affection, has its highest, its unqualified, its poetically unqualified, exclusive expression in the fact that there is but one single object of love in the whole world, and that only the first time of falling in love is love, is everything, the second falling in love nothing. It is customary to say, speaking proverbially, that once is nothing; here, on the contrary, once is unconditionally everything, a second time the unconditional destruction of everything.

This is poetry, and the emphasis lies unconditionally upon the highest expression of passion: to be or not to be. To love a second time too is not loving, but is abhorrent to poetry. If a so-called poet would have us imagine that earthly love can repeat itself in the same man, if a so-called poet wishes to occupy himself with clever foolishness which presumably would exhaust the mysteriousness of passion in the "why" of cleverness, then he is not a poet. Nor is that which he posits in place of poetic love, Christian love. Christian love teaches love to all men, unconditionally all. Just as unconditionally and strongly as earthly love tends toward the idea of there being but one single object of love, equally unconditionally and strongly Christian love tends in the opposite direction. If a man with respect to Christian love wishes to make an exception in the case of one man whom he does not wish to love, then such love is not "also Christian love," but it is unconditionally not Christian love.

And yet there is much the same confusion in our so-called Christendom: the poets have given up passionate love, they yield, they relax the tension of passion, they knock off (by adding to) and believe that a man, in the sense of falling in love, can love many times, so that there are consequently several objects of love; the [so-called] Christian love also yields, relaxes the tension of eternity, lessens its demands and thinks that when one loves a great deal, then it is Christian love. So *both* the poetic and the Christian love become confused; and that which

takes their place is *neither* poetic *nor* Christian. Passion always has this unconditional characteristic, that it excludes the third party, that is, the third party makes for confusion. To love without passion is an impossibility; but the distinction between earthly and Christian love lies therefore in the one possible eternal difference of passion. Any other difference between earthly and Christian love cannot well be imagined. If a man, therefore, were to think that he could at one and the same time understand his life by the aid of the poet and by the help of Christian explanations, were to believe that he could understand these two explanations jointly—and in such a way that they gave meaning to his life—then he is in error. The poetic and the Christian explanations are exact opposites; the poet idolizes earthly affection, and therefore he is absolutely right in saying, since he constantly thinks only of earthly love, that to command one to love is the greatest of follies and the most absurd saying; as Christianity is always thinking only of the Christian love, it is also absolutely right when it pushes earthly love from the throne and sets this "shalt" in its place.

The poet and Christianity present exactly opposing explanations, or more exactly expressed, the poet really explains nothing, for he explains earthly love and friendship—in riddles; he explains earthly love and friendship as riddles, but Christianity explains love eternally. From this again we see that it is an impossibility to live at one time according to both explanations, for the greatest possible contradiction between two explanations is certainly that the one is no explanation, and the other is an explanation. Earthly love and friendship, therefore, as the poet understands them, involve no moral problem. Love and friendship are a matter of chance; it is fortunate, poetically understood (and certainly the poet has an excellent understanding of good fortune), the highest good fortune, to fall in love, to find the one and only beloved; it is good fortune, almost equally as great a good fortune, to find the one and only friend. At most, the moral task lies only in being duly thankful for one's good fortune. On the other hand, the task is never that one *must* find the beloved, or find this friend; this cannot be done, as the poet very well understands. The problem consequently depends on whether fortune will furnish one with a task; but this is precisely the same as saying that morally understood there is no task.

If, on the other hand, one *must* love his neighbor, then the task *is* the moral task, which is again the source of all tasks. Just because Christian morality is the true morality, it knows how to cut short extensive reflections, to cut off the voluminous preambles, to do away with temporary delays, and to prevent wasting time. The Christian is immediately close to his task because he has it in himself. There is a great dispute in the world as to what is to be called the highest. But

whatever is called so, whatever the demarcation is: it is incredible that there should be so many complications connected with apprehending it.

On the other hand, Christianity at once teaches a man the shortest way to find the supreme good: "Shut thy door and pray to God"—for God is certainly the highest. And if a man will go out into the world, then he may perhaps go far—and go in vain, travel around the world—and in vain, in order to find the beloved or the friend. But Christianity never suffers a man to take even a single step in vain; for the door you closed in order to pray to God, when you open it again and go out, then the first man you meet is your neighbor whom you *must* love. Wonderful!

Perhaps a maiden tries curiously and superstitiously to learn her future fate, to see her future lover; and a fraudulent wisdom makes her imagine that when she has done something so and so, then she will know him because he will be the first one she will meet on such and such a day. I wonder if it would also be so difficult to get to see one's neighbor—if one did not prevent himself from seeing him; for Christianity has made it eternally impossible to be mistaken about him; there is not in the whole world any single man who is so certainly and so easily recognizable as the neighbor. You can never confuse him with any other man, for all men are the neighbor. If you confuse another man with your neighbor, then in the last analysis there is no mistake, for the other man is also your neighbor. It is your fault if you will not understand who your neighbor is. If under cover of darkness you save a man's life, believing that you are saving your friend's life—but instead it turned out to be your neighbor, then this is not a fault; alas, on the other hand, it becomes precisely a fault if you were only willing to save your friend. If your friend complains over the fact that you, as he believes, through an error did for your neighbor what he thought you would do only for him, then rest assured it is your friend who is wrong.

The point at issue between the poet and Christianity can be quite accurately defined in this way: *Earthly love and friendship are partiality and the passion of partiality*; Christian love is self-denying love, therefore it vouches for this "shalt." To exhaust these passions is bewildering. But the extreme passionate limits of partiality lie in exclusiveness, in loving only one; the extreme limits of self-denial lie in self-sacrifice, in not excluding a single one.

In other times when a man had made an earnest effort to understand Christianity, he believed that Christianity had something against earthly love because it is based on impulse; he believed that Christianity which, as spirit, has set dissension between flesh and spirit, hated earthly love as being sensual. But this was a misunderstanding, an overstraining of

the spiritual. In addition, it can easily be shown that Christianity is very far from irrationally wishing to excite the sensual in a man by teaching him eccentricity; does not Paul say that it is better to marry than to burn! No, just because Christianity is in truth spirit, therefore it understands by the sensual something different from what one naturally calls the sensual; and just as little as it has wished to forbid men to eat and drink, just so little has it taken offense at a natural impulse, which a man certainly did not give himself. By the sensual Christianity means the carnal, the selfish; there can be no imaginable dispute between spirit and flesh unless there is a rebellious spirit on the part of the flesh, with which the spirit then strives; thus there can be no imaginable conflict between the spirit and a stone, or between the spirit and a tree. Consequently the sensual is selfishness. And it is just because of this that Christianity harbors a suspicion about earthly love and friendship, because partiality in passion, or passionate partiality, is really another form of selfishness.

Lo, this too is something paganism never dreamed of. Because paganism has never had any idea of self-denying love for the neighbor whom one "must" love, therefore it classified it thus: selfishness is abominable because it is selfishness; but love and friendship, which are passionate partiality, are love. But Christianity, which has made manifest what love is, classifies it in a different way: selfishness and passionate partiality are essentially one; but love to the neighbor is love. "To love the beloved," says Christianity, "is that to love?" And it adds, "Do not even the heathen the same?" "To love one's friend, is that to love?" says Christianity. "Do not even the heathen the same?" If therefore someone were to believe that the distinction between heathendom and Christianity lies in the fact that the beloved and the friend in Christianity are loved with a wholly different loyalty and tenderness than in heathendom, then this is a misunderstanding. Does not paganism also show examples of love and friendship so perfect that the apprentice poet goes back to them? But no one in heathendom loved his neighbor. No one suspected that he existed. What heathendom, then, called love, as distinguished from selfishness, was partiality. But a passionate partiality is essentially another form of selfishness; so here again one sees the truth of the saying of the venerable Fathers: "that the virtues of heathendom are shining vices."

That passionate partiality is another form of selfishness will now be demonstrated, together with its converse, that self-denying love loves the neighbor as one *should* love. As selfishly as self-love closes about this only "self," whereby it becomes selfishness, equally selfishly the passionate partiality of love closes about this only beloved, and the passionate partiality of friendship about this one friend. The beloved and

the friend are therefore called, remarkably and profoundly enough, the other self, the other I—for the neighbor is the other you, or, to be quite accurate, the third person in the equilateral. The other self, the other I. But wherein lies the selfishness? It lies in the I, in the self. Would not then selfishness also stick at loving the other I, the other self? Truly one does not need to be any great judge of character in order, by the help of this clue, to make discoveries serious for others and humiliating to one's self, about earthly love and friendship. The fire which exists in selfishness is spontaneous, the I ignites itself by itself; but in earthly love and friendship, poetically understood, there is also spontaneous ignition. True enough, as we say, it is only at times, and then morbidly, that jealousy *shows* itself; but from that it by no means follows that it is not at bottom always *present* in earthly love and friendship. Test it: introduce between the lover and the beloved the neighbor as the intermediate person one must love: interpose the neighbor between friend and friend as the intermediate person that one must love: and you will instantly see the jealousy. But nevertheless the concept of neighbor is precisely the middle term of self-abnegation, which enters between the I and I of selfishness, but also between the I and the other I of earthly love and friendship. That it is selfishness when a faithless lover wishes to get rid of the beloved, wishes to leave a friend in the lurch, paganism also realized, and the poet sees it. But only Christianity sees that the devotion with which the lover gives himself up to this one, with which, moreover, he clings to him, is selfishness. But can *devotion* and *limitless submission* still be *selfishness*? Surely yes, when the devotion is to the other I, the other self.

Let a poet describe how earthly love must exist in a man so that he can call it love; he will mention much which we do not stop for here, but then he will add: "and then there must be admiration, the lover must admire the beloved." The neighbor, on the contrary, is never mentioned as an object of admiration; Christianity has never taught that one should admire the neighbor—but one must love him. Hence there must be admiration in earthly love, and the stronger, the more intense the admiration is, the better, says the poet. Now to admire another man is certainly not selfishness. But to be loved by the only one admired, would not this relationship selfishly come back to the I who loves—his other I? And so too with friendship. To admire another man is certainly not selfishness, but to be the only friend of this only admired friend—would not this relationship in a serious way revert to the I from which it started? Is this not plainly the danger of selfishness, that when one has but a single object of admiration, that then the one admired reciprocally makes the admirer the sole object of his love or of his friendship?

To love the neighbor, on the contrary, is self-denying love and drives out all partiality, just as it drives out all selfishness—otherwise the self-abnegation would also make distinctions and feel partiality for partiality. Even if passionate partiality had no other selfishness in it, it still has this, that there is, consciously or unconsciously, willfulness in it, unconsciously insofar as it is subject to natural laws, consciously insofar as it unrestrainedly abandons itself to and assents to the power of this law. However secret, however unconscious the self-will is in its passionate devotion to its "sole object," this arbitrariness is everywhere manifest. That sole object was not found through obedience to that royal law, "Thou shalt love," but through choosing, moreover by unconditionally choosing, that one single individual—for Christian love, too, has but one single object, the neighbor, but the concept of neighbor is as far as possible removed from being one single man, infinitely far from that, for the neighbor is all men. When the lover or the friend, as the poet delights to hear, can love only this one man in the whole world, then there is in this prodigious devotion a prodigious willfulness, and in this impetuous, boundless devotion, which is really devotion to himself, the lover is really selfish. Self-abnegation wishes to root out this selfishness, this willfulness, through the "thou shalt" of eternity. And the self-abnegation which in judgment enters in to test the selfishness is two-edged, so that it cuts equally both ways. We know very well that there is a selfishness which one may call faithless selfishness, but we know too equally well that there is a selfishness which may be called devoted selfishness. The task of self-abnegation is therefore twofold: to distinguish between these two forms. As regards the faithless selfishness which wishes to evade, the task is: sacrifice yourself; with respect to the devoted selfishness, the task is: renounce this sacrifice. And that which pleases the poet immeasurably, that the lover should say: "I cannot love anyone else, I cannot get along without love, I cannot give up this love, it would be my death, I should die of love," does not please the self-abnegation at all; it simply cannot bear to have such devotion honored by the name of love, since it is selfishness. Self-abnegation first passes its judgment, and then sets the task: love thy neighbor, him thou *shalt* love.

Everywhere where Christianity exists there is also self-abnegation, which is Christianity's essential form. In order to live as a Christian, one must first and foremost become sober; but self-abnegation is exactly the transition through which a man, in the meaning of the eternal, becomes sober. On the other hand, wherever Christianity does not exist, the intoxication of self-esteem reaches its maximum, and this intoxicated exaltation is what is admired. But earthly love and friendship are the highest expression of self-esteem; they are the I intoxicated in the

other I. The more closely the two I's cling together to form one I, the more this united self selfishly excludes all others. At the supreme apex of earthly love and friendship the two actually become one self, one I. This is explicable only because partiality contains a natural force (impulse—inclination) and a selfishness which can selfishly unite the two in a new selfish self.

Spiritual love, on the contrary, takes away from myself all natural impulses and all selfishness, and therefore love for my neighbor cannot make me into one with my neighbor in a united self. Love for the neighbor is love between two beings, each eternally determined as spirit. Love to the neighbor is spiritual love, but two spirits can never become one self in a selfish sense. In earthly love and friendship the two love each other by virtue of their dissimilarities, or by virtue of their similarities which underlie the differences (as when two friends love each other because of a similarity in morals, character, occupations, training and so on, consequently because of the similarity by which they differ from other men, or by which they resemble each other in being different from other men), therefore the two can in a selfish sense become one self; neither of them is yet himself the spiritual determination of "self," neither of them has as yet learned to love himself in the Christian sense of the word. In earthly love the ego is sensually-psychically-spiritually determined, the beloved a sensual-psychical-spiritual determination; in friendship the ego is psycho-spiritually defined, the friend a psycho-spiritual determination. Only in love to one's neighbor is the self which loves, purely spiritually defined as spirit, and the neighbor a purely spiritual qualification. Therefore what we said at the beginning of this discourse by no means applies to earthly love and friendship, that only one man is needed who is recognized as neighbor, in order to cure a man of selfishness, if in this one man he loves his neighbor. For in the beloved and the friend the neighbor is not loved, but the other I, or the first I, once more, even better. It is frequently as if a man, although selfishness is predominant, does not have the strength to be selfish alone, so that his selfishness does not really appear until his other ego is found, and the two egos in this union find strength for the selfish self-esteem.

If anyone thinks that a man by falling in love or by having found a friend, has learned to know the Christian love, then he is seriously mistaken. No, if anyone is in love and in such a way that the poet would say about him that "he really is in love," then the commandment of love may be changed a little when it is said to him, and yet say the same thing. The commandment of love may say to him: "Love your neighbor as you love your sweetheart." And yet, since he does not love his sweetheart "as himself," what does the commandment which speaks about

the neighbor command? Certainly he loves, but the beloved he loves "as himself" is not the neighbor, the beloved is the other I. Whether we are speaking about the first I or about the other I, we do not thereby come a step nearer to the neighbor; for the neighbor is the first you. In its strictest sense selfishness at bottom loves the other I, for the other I is himself. And yet this is certainly selfishness. But in the same sense it is selfishness to love the other I, who is the beloved or the friend. And as selfishness in the strictest sense has been described as self-worship, so earthly love and friendship (as the poet understands them, and on his understanding this love stands or falls) are idolatry. For ultimately love to God is the decisive thing; from it stems love to the neighbor, but paganism never suspected this. They left God out; they made earthly love and friendship into love, and abominated selfishness. But the Christian commandment of love commands men to love God above all else, and next to love the neighbor. In earthly love and friendship partiality is the middle term. In love to the neighbor, God is the middle term; if you love God above all else, then you also love your neighbor and in your neighbor every man. Only by loving God above all else can one love his neighbor in the other man. The other man, this is the neighbor who is the other man in the sense that the other man is every other man. Consequently, thus understood, the discourse was right when in the beginning it said that if a man loves his neighbor in one single other man, then he loves all men.

Love to the neighbor is therefore the eternal equality in loving, but the eternal equality is the opposite of partiality. This needs no extensive discussion. Equality precisely consists in not making distinctions, and eternal equality is unconditionally not to make the least distinction, unqualifiedly not to make the least distinction; partiality, on the other hand, consists in making a distinction, a passionate distinction, in making an unlimited distinction.

But has not Christianity then, when by its "Thou *shalt* love" it pushed earthly love and friendship from the throne, set something far higher in their place? Something far higher—however, let us speak with caution, the caution of orthodoxy. People have confused Christianity in many ways, but among others also, in that by calling it the highest, the most profound, they made it appear that the purely human is related to the Christian as the high or the higher is to the most high and to the supreme. Alas, but this is a deceptive way of speaking which falsely and indecently allows Christianity officiously to wish to ingratiate itself with human inquisitiveness or curiosity. Is there really anything of which humanity as such, anything of which the natural man is more desirous than of the highest! If but a newsmonger trumpets that his most recent news is of the highest importance, then he succeeds

famously in attracting those worldly followers who from time immemorial have had an indescribable predilection for and have felt a deep need of—being deceived. No, the Christian is certainly the highest and the supreme category, but it is well to note too that to the natural man it is an offense. He who in qualifying the Christian as the highest category, omits the intermediate qualification of offense, sins against it; he perpetrates an audacity more abominable even than if a modest wife were to array herself like a ballet dancer; even more terrible than if that austere judge, John the Baptist, were to dress like a dandy. The Christian category is in itself too heavy, too serious in its movements to whisk about like a dancer in the triviality of such easygoing speeches about the higher, the highest, the all-highest. The Christian Way is the way of offense. This is not to say that the approach to the Christian Way should be by giving offense: this would certainly hinder one self in another way from apprehending Christianity; but offense guards the approach to the Christian way. Blessed is he who is not offended by it.

Now also as to this command about loving the neighbor. Only admit, or if it is embarrassing to you to speak in this way, then I shall admit, that many times it has offended me, and that I am still very far from imagining that I have fulfilled this commandment, which to flesh and blood is an offense, and to wisdom foolishness. If you, my hearer, are perhaps what we call an educated man, well, I too am educated. But if I think by the help of "education" to come nearer this highest, then I am greatly in error. And the error lies just here; for we all wish for education, and education constantly has "the highest" on its lips; moreover, no bird that has learned one single word repeats this word more incessantly, and no crow repeats its own name more uninterruptedly, than the educated constantly harp on "the highest." But the Christian "highest" is by no means the "highest" of the educated, and the Christian "highest" disciplines precisely through the repulsion of offense. You will readily see this; for truly, has your education, or do you believe that any man's enthusiasm for an education, has taught him to love his neighbor? Alas, has not education and the zeal for acquiring it rather developed a new kind of difference, the difference between the educated and the uneducated? Only listen to what is said among the educated about earthly love and friendship, what equality in education a friend must have, how a girl must be educated and just in what way. Read the poets who scarcely know how to preserve their independence as over against the powerful dominance of the educated classes; scarcely dare to believe in the power of love to break the chain of distinctions—does it seem to you that this speech, this poem, or that a life which is consistent with this speech and this poem, bring a man any nearer to loving his neighbor? Lo, here again the signs of the offense stand out.

For consider the most cultured man you know, about whom we all admiringly say, "He is so cultured," and then consider Christianity which says to him, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor!" Moreover, a certain urbanity in all relations, a courtesy toward all men, a friendly condescension toward inferiors, a confident bearing toward the influential, an admirably controlled freedom of spirit: truly that is culture—do you believe that it is also loving your neighbor?

The neighbor is your equal. The neighbor is not your beloved for whom you have a passionate partiality, not your friend for whom you have a passionate partiality. Nor, if you are an educated man, is your neighbor the one who is educated, with whom you are equal in education—for with your neighbor you have human equality before God. Nor is the neighbor the one who is more distinguished than yourself, that is, he is not your neighbor just because he is more distinguished than yourself, for loving him because he is more distinguished can then easily become partiality, and insofar selfishness. Nor is your neighbor one who is inferior to you, that is, insofar as he is humbler than yourself he is not your neighbor, for to love one because he is inferior to yourself can readily become the condescension of partiality, and insofar selfishness. No, loving your neighbor is a matter of equality. It is encouraging in your relation to a distinguished man, that in him you *must love* your neighbor; it is humbling in relation to the inferior, that you do not have to love the inferior in him, but *must* love your neighbor; it is a saving grace if you do it, for you *must* do it. The neighbor is every man; for he is not your neighbor through the difference, or through the equality with you as in your difference from other men. He is your neighbor through equality with you before God, but every man unconditionally has this equality, and has it unconditionally.

II

C. *THOU* SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOR

SO then go out and practice it; forget the diversities and their like, so that you can love your neighbor. Do away with the distinctions of partiality, so that you can love your neighbor. This will not lead you to cease to love the beloved, oh, far from it! For in that case, the word "neighbor" would be the greatest deception ever invented, if, in order to love your neighbor, you must start by giving up your love for those for whom you feel affection. What is more, it would also be a contradiction, for since the concept "neighbor" embraces all men, certainly no one can be excluded—shall we say, least of all the beloved? No, for that is the language of partiality. Consequently if it is only partiality which must be taken away—and this does not also in turn apply to the neighbor, then you would love your neighbor with an extravagant partiality in contrast to the beloved.

No, as one says to the solitary, "Take care that you do not become ensnared in selfishness," so we may say to the two lovers: "Take care that your love does not ensnare you in selfishness." For the more decisively and exclusively partiality encloses one single man, the further he is from loving his neighbor. You, husband, do not subject your wife to the temptation arising from her love for you, of forgetting to love her neighbor; you, wife, do not subject your husband to this temptation! The lovers certainly believe that in their earthly love they have the highest possible. Oh, but it is not so, for in it they have not yet secured the eternal through the eternal.

It is true the poet promises the lovers immortality, if they are truly lovers; but who is the poet who gives them this promise? One who cannot even vouch for himself. The "royal law," on the contrary, the commandment of love, promises life, eternal life, and this commandment simply says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor." And as this commandment wishes to teach every man how he ought to love himself, so it also wishes to teach love and friendship the right kind of love: preserve in loving yourself your love for your neighbor; preserve in your earthly love and friendship your love for your neighbor. This idea will perhaps repel you—then you will know that the signs of offense are always present to the Christian. But, nevertheless, believe this; believe that the Teacher who would not quench any smoking flax, will not extinguish any noble fire within a man; believe that He who was love, simply wishes to teach every man to love; believe that if all the poets united in one song in praise of earthly love and friendship, all they had to say would be as nothing in comparison with the commandment, "Thou

shalt love, thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself!" Do not cease to believe because the commandment almost offends you, because the discourse does not sound as flattering as that of the poets who by their songs insinuate themselves into your happiness, but sounds repulsive and terrifying, as if it would snatch you out of your beloved retreat of partiality—do not therefore cease to believe it; consider that just because the commandment is thus and the discourse thus, just because of this, its object can be the object of faith! Do not indulge yourself in the conceit that you might be able to bargain, that by loving some men, friends and relatives, you would be loving your neighbor—for this would be giving up the poetic without apprehending the Christian, and it was for the sake of preventing this bargaining that the discourse attempted to place you between the pride of the poet, who disdains all bargaining, and the divine majesty of the royal law, which makes all bargaining an offense. No, love your beloved faithfully and tenderly, but let the love for your neighbor be the more sacred in the covenant of your union with God! Love your friend sincerely and devotedly, but let your love for your neighbor be what you learn from each other in the confidence of friendship with God! Behold, death levels all differences, but partiality always retains the difference, yet the way to life and to the eternal is through death, and through the leveling of differences: therefore only the love to the neighbor truly leads to life.

As the joyous message of Christianity is contained in the teaching about mankind's kinship with God, so is its problem man's likeness to God. But God is love, therefore we can resemble God only in loving, as we also, according to the Apostle's word, can only be "God's fellow-laborers in—love." Just because you love your beloved, you do not resemble God, for with God there is no partiality, as you many times in your humility, but also many times in your self-satisfaction, have considered. Insofar as you love your friend you do not resemble God, for before God there is no difference. But when you love your neighbor, then you resemble God.

So, then, go out and act accordingly; forget the differences so that you can love your neighbor. Alas, perhaps it is not even necessary to say this to you, perhaps you found no one in the world to love, no friend on the way, so that your way lay in solitude. Or perhaps God took from your side and gave you a beloved, but death took and took her from your side; he took again and took your friend, but gave you no one in his place, so that now you walk alone, so that you have no beloved one to protect your weak side and no friend at your right hand. Or perhaps life separated you even if you continued unchanged—in the loneliness of separation. Perhaps change separated you, so that you

walk alone in sorrow because you found, but also found what you found changed! How disconsolate! Moreover, only ask the poet how distressing it is to live in loneliness, to have lived in loneliness, without being loved and without having any one to love. Just ask the poet whether he knows other than that it is comfortless when death steps in between the lovers, or when life separates friend from friend, or when a change of feeling separates them as enemies from one another. For certainly the poet loves solitude, he loves it—in order in solitude to discover the missing happiness of love and friendship, just as one who would gaze at the stars in wonder, seeks a dark place.

And yet if it were not his own fault that a man found no one to love; and if through no fault of his own he sought in vain to find a friend; and if the loss, the separation, the change in feeling, were not his own fault: under these circumstances what more does the poet know than that this is very distressing? But then the poet too is subject to change if he, the proclaimer of happiness, knows nothing else than the shriek of desolation in the day of need. Or are you not willing to call it change, do you wish to call it loyalty in the poet that he—disconsolately sorrows with the desolate sorrowing? Oh, well, we shall not quarrel about that. But if you wish to compare this human fidelity with that of heaven and eternity, then you will certainly admit that there is a difference. For heaven not only rejoices more than any poet with the glad, but heaven not only sorrows with the sorrowing, no, heaven has a new, a more blessed joy in store for the sorrowing. So Christianity always has consolation, and its consolation is different from all human consolation, in that human consolation is conscious of being only compensation for the loss of gladness: the Christian consolation *is gladness*. Humanly speaking, consolation is a later invention: first comes suffering and pain and loss of joy, and then later, alas, sometimes much later, man came on the track of the consolation. And the same thing is true of the individual life: first come suffering and pain and loss of joy, and then later, sometimes after a long time, comes the consolation. But the Christian consolation can never be said to come too late, for since it is the consolation of eternity it is older than all temporal happiness. And as soon as this consolation comes, it comes with the impulse of the eternal, and swallows up, as it were, the pain, for pain and loss of happiness are the momentary—even if this moment is prolonged into years—are the momentary which is swallowed up in the eternal. And the Christian consolation is therefore not a compensation for the loss of happiness, since it is happiness; all other happiness is in the last analysis only despondency in comparison with the consolation of Christianity. Alas, if man's earthly life were not so perfect, so that the eternal happiness might be proclaimed to him as happiness he

had and has himself forfeited! That is why the happiness of eternity can only be preached to him as consolation. As the human eye cannot stand looking at the rays of the sun except through a dark glass, so a man cannot endure the joy of eternity except through the dimness which comes from its being preached as consolation.

Consequently whatever your fortune was in love or friendship, whatever your need was, whatever your loss, whatever the despondency of your life in your confidence in the poet: the highest still remains—love your neighbor! Him you can easily find, that is certain; you can unconditionally always find him, that is certain; you can never lose him. For the beloved can behave toward you in such a way that he is lost, and you can lose a friend; but however your neighbor treats you, you can never lose him. It is true that you may continue to love the beloved and the friend, however they treat you, but you cannot continue truly to call them the beloved and the friend when they, so much the worse, have in truth changed. On the other hand, no change can take your neighbor from you, for it is not the neighbor who holds you fast, but it is your love which holds the neighbor fast; if your love for your neighbor remains unchanged, then the neighbor also remains unchanged just by the fact of existing. And death cannot deprive you of your neighbor, for if it takes one, then life at once gives you another. Death can deprive you of a friend, because in loving your friend you are really united with the friend; but in loving your neighbor you are united with God, and therefore death cannot deprive you of your neighbor. If you have therefore lost everything in love and friendship, if you have never enjoyed any of this happiness: you still have the best left in loving your neighbor.

Love to the neighbor has, namely, the perfections of eternity. And is it really a perfection in love to have as its object the superior, the extraordinary, the unique? I thought that would be a perfection in the object, and this perfection of the object like a subtle misgiving against the perfection of love. Does it indicate a superior quality in your love if it can love *only* the extraordinary, the rare? I should think it would be an advantage to the extraordinary and the rare that it is extraordinary and rare, but not to love. And are you not also of the same opinion? For have you never thought about God's love? If it were to love's advantage to love the extraordinary, then, if I dare say so, God would be embarrassed, for the extraordinary simply does not exist for Him. The advantage of being able to love *only* the extraordinary is hence rather an accusation, not against the extraordinary, or against love, but against the love which can love *only* the extraordinary. Or is it an advantage to a man's sensitive well-being that he can feel well *only* in one single place in the whole world, surrounded by every favorable circum-

stance? If you *see* a man who has thus arranged his life, what is it then you praise? Of course, the convenience of his arrangements. But have you never noticed that it is actually true that every word you utter in your panegyric over this magnificence really sounds like ridicule of the poor man who can live *only* in this magnificent environment?

Consequently the perfection of its object is not the perfection of love. And just because the neighbor has none of those perfections which the beloved, the friend, the admired, the cultured, the rare, the extraordinary man has to so high a degree, just for that reason the love for the neighbor has all those perfections which the love for the beloved, the friend, the cultured, the admired, the rare, the extraordinary man, does not have. Let the world dispute as much as it will about which object of love is the most perfect: there can never be any dispute about the fact that love to the neighbor is the most perfect love. And therefore all other love has the imperfection that concerning it there are two questions and consequently some ambiguity: there is first the question about the object and then about the love, or both questions are about the object and the love. But as to love for one's neighbor, there is only one question, that about love, and there is only the single answer of eternity: this is love. For this love to one's neighbor is not like the relation of one kind of love to other kinds of love. Earthly love is qualified by its object, friendship is qualified by its object, love to one's neighbor alone is qualified by love. When the neighbor is every man, unconditionally every man, then are all the distinctions taken away from the object and consequently this love is recognizable by the fact that its object is without any closer qualifications of difference, that is to say, that this love is recognizable only by love. Is not this the highest perfection? For insofar as love can and may be recognizable in some other way, then this other way, by that very fact, makes this love suspect, in that it is not comprehensive enough, and hence not in an eternal sense infinite; this other love is a love which is even unconsciously predisposed to morbidness. In this suspicion, therefore, there dwells concealed the apprehension which makes love and friendship dependent on their object, the apprehension which is able to inflame jealousy, the apprehension which can drive one to despair. But love for one's neighbor is without suspicion in the relationship, and therefore cannot become suspiciousness in the lover. Nevertheless, this love is not proudly independent of its object, its equality does not arise from the fact that love proudly withdraws into itself, indifferent to its object; no, the equality arises from the fact that love humbly turns out toward its object, embracing everyone, and yet loving each one individually, but no one in particular.

Let us consider here what we developed in the preceding chapter,

that love in a man is a necessity to him, is an expression of his wealth. Hence the deeper this need is, the greater his wealth; if the need is infinite, then, too, is his wealth. When a man's need for love is satisfied with loving only one, then we must nevertheless, although admitting that this need is wealth, say concerning it, that he really needs that man. On the other hand, when a man's need of love consists in loving everyone, then it is a need, and it is so powerful that it is almost as if it must be able to produce its own object. In the first case the emphasis lies on the particular object of love, in the second case on the essentiality of the need, and only in the latter sense is the need an expression of wealth; and only in the latter case are the need and the object in an infinite sense related to one another on equal terms, for to the first man every man is the neighbor, or there is in a *special* sense no object, while in an infinite sense every man is the object. If one feels a need to talk with a certain particular man, then he really needs this man; but if his need for talking is so great that he must talk even if he is placed on a desert isle or in solitary confinement; if his need is so great that any man is the one he wishes to talk to, then his need is wealth. And he who loves his neighbor, his love is a need, the deepest need; he does not need men in order to have some one to love him; but he needs to love men. Still there is no pride or arrogance in this wealth, for God is the middle term, and the "shalt" of eternity binds and directs this powerful need so that it does not go astray and become pride. But there are no limitations in the object, for the neighbor is all men, unconditionally every man.

The man who truly loves his neighbor, therefore loves also his enemy. This distinction, "friend or enemy," is a difference in the object of love, but love for one's neighbor truly has an object which is without discrimination; the neighbor is the absolutely indistinguishable difference between man and man, or it is the eternal resemblance before God—and the enemy also has this resemblance. We think that it is impossible for a man to love his enemy, alas! for enemies can hardly bear to look at each other. Oh, well, then close your eyes—then the enemy absolutely resembles your neighbor; close your eyes and remember the commandment that *thou shalt love*, then you love—your enemy? No, then you love your neighbor, for you do not see that he is your enemy. That is, if you close your eyes, then you do not see the earthly difference; but enmity is also one of the earthly differences. And when you close your eyes, then your mind is not distracted and diverted at the very moment when you should listen to the word of the commandment. Then when your mind is not distracted and diverted by looking at the object of your love and at the difference in the object, then you become merely an ear for hearing the word of the commandment which said to you,

and to you alone, that "thou" shalt love thy neighbor. Lo, then are you on the way of perfection toward loving your neighbor, when your eye is closed and you are become only an ear for hearing the commandment.

And it is true (as we have already explained where we showed that the idea of neighbor is a purely spiritual determination) that one sees the neighbor only with the eye closed, or by looking *away from* the differences. The sensual eye always looks *at* the differences. Therefore earthly prudence always cries early and late: "Look out, whom you love!" Alas, if one truly loves his neighbor, then it is better not to look out for everything; for this prudence, when it comes to testing the object, will actually bring it about so that you never get to see your neighbor because he is every man, any man taken quite blindly. The poet despises this seeing blindness of prudence which teaches that one should take care as to whom one loves; the poet teaches that love is blind; according to the poet, the lover will find his object in a mysterious, inexplicable manner, or fall in love and so become—blind from love, blind to every fault, every imperfection in the beloved, blind to everything except this beloved—but yet not blind to the fact that this is the only beloved in the whole world. When this is so, then certainly earthly love makes a man blind, but it also makes him very particular not to confuse any other man with this one beloved; hence it makes him blind as regards the beloved, by teaching him to make a tremendous distinction between this one beloved and all other men. But love for one's neighbor makes a man blind in the deepest and noblest and most blessed sense, so that he blindly loves every man as the lover loves the beloved.

Love for the neighbor has the perfections of eternity—*which is perhaps the reason why it sometimes seems to fit in so little with the relations of the earthly life, with the temporal difference of worldliness; that it is so easily misunderstood and subjected to hate; that in any case it is a very unthankful task to love one's neighbor.*

Even the one who is not ordinarily inclined to praise God and Christianity, nevertheless does so when he shudderingly contemplates the terrifying facts of how in paganism the discriminations of the earthly life, or how the caste system, inhumanly separate man from man; how this ungodly wickedness inhumanly teaches one man to disavow kinship with another; teaches him presumptuously and madly to say about another man that he does not exist, that he is "not born." Then even that man praises Christianity which has saved men from this evil by deeply and forever unforgettably emphasizing the kinship between man and man, because the kinship is assured by every individual's equal kinship with and his relation to God in Christ; because the Christian teaching applies equally to every individual, and teaches him that God has created him, and that Christ has redeemed him; because that Christian teaching

calls every man aside and says to him, "Close your door and pray to God, then you have the highest a man can have; love your Saviour, then you have everything both in life and death; and disregard the differences, they neither add to nor subtract from."

And I wonder if the one who from the mountain peak sees the clouds below him, I wonder if he is disturbed by this sight; I wonder if he is disturbed by the thunder storm that rages in the region down below him. And so high has Christianity set every man, unconditionally every man—for before Christ, as little as before the face of God, there is no number, no multitude, the innumerable are numbered to Him, the multitude is made up of individuals; so high has Christianity set every man, so that he may not harm his soul by becoming arrogant, or by groaning over the discriminations of the earthly life. For Christianity has not *taken away* the *differences,* any more than Christ Himself would, or would ask God to *take the disciples out of the world*—and this amounts to one and the same thing. There has never lived in Christendom, any more than in heathendom, any man who has not been arrayed in or clothed upon with the differences of the earthly life. As little as the Christian lives or can live without a physical body, just as little can he live outside the differences of the earthly life to which every individual by birth, by condition, by circumstances, by education and so on, specially belongs—none of us is the pure man. Christianity is too earnest to talk nonsense about pure man, it only wishes to make all men pure. Christianity is not a fairy tale, although the happiness it promises is more glorious than that in any fairy tale; nor is it an ingenious chimera which is intended to be difficult to understand, and which also requires one single condition, an idle head and an empty brain.

Consequently Christianity has a horror of that heathendom, and has once for all overridden it; but it has not taken away the differences in the earthly life. These must continue as long as the temporal existence continues, and must continue to tempt every man who comes into the world. For by being a Christian he is not exempt from the differences, but by triumphing over the temptation of the differences, he becomes Christian. In the so-called Christendom, therefore, the earthly difference is always a temptation. Alas! perhaps it does more than tempt, so that one man becomes arrogant, the other defiantly envious. Both cases are rebellion, rebellion against the Christian. Far be it from us, in truth, to confirm anyone in the presumptuous error of assuming that only the powerful and the distinguished are guilty of this; for if the poor and the impotent man merely defiantly aspires to the advantages denied him in the earthly life, instead of humbly aspiring to the blessed equality of the Christian life, then he also harms his own soul. Christianity is not

blind, nor is it one-sided; with the calm of eternity it looks dispassionately at all the differences of the earthly life, but it does not contentiously take sides; it sees, and certainly with sadness, that earthly busyness and the false prophets of worldliness will conjure up this appearance of equality in the name of Christianity—as if it were only the powerful who are tempted by worldly differences, as if the poor would be justified in doing everything to gain equality—not merely by becoming a Christian in deed and in truth. I wonder if by that way one could come any nearer to the Christian likeness and the Christian equality.

Christianity will not take the difference away, either the difference of rank or the difference of insignificance; but on the other hand, there is no temporal difference, not the most favorable and acceptable in the eyes of the world, with which Christianity will side in partiality. Whether the temporal difference, in which a man offends by clinging fast to it in worldliness, is in the eyes of the world revolting and shocking, or innocent and honorable, simply does not interest Christianity, which makes no worldly distinctions, which does not look at that thing by which a man harms his soul, but only at the fact that he does injure his soul—is that an insignificance? Perhaps; but the fact that he does injure his soul is certainly not insignificant. Between the extremes of distinction and insignificance there lie a great many closer qualifications of worldly differences; but there are none of these closer and therefore less obvious differences of which Christianity makes an exception. The worldly differences are like a huge net in which the temporal existence is caught; the meshes in this net are of varying sizes, one man seems more bound and snared in the net of existence than another; but all these differences, the difference between difference and difference, the comparative difference, have no interest for Christianity, not the least; such an occupation and concern remains a worldly one.

Christianity and worldliness can never come to understand each other, even if for a moment—to a lesser scrupulousness, they may delusively seem to. To secure an equal place in the world with other men, to make temporal conditions as similar as possible for all men, those are certainly things that worldliness considers of extreme importance. But even in this respect, what we may venture to call the well-intentioned worldly effort never completely understands Christianity. The well-intentioned worldliness holds itself piously—if one wishes to call it that—convinced that there must be one temporal condition, one earthly difference—which one may find by the help of calculations and surveys, or in any other preferred manner—where there is equality. If this condition were to become the only one for all men, then equality would be brought about. But partly, this cannot be done, and partly, this common equality of all

arising from having the same temporal differences, is not at all Christian equality; worldly equality, even if it were possible, is not Christian equality. And to bring about a perfect worldly equality is an impossibility. The well-intentioned worldliness itself really admits it; it rejoices when it succeeds in making temporal conditions more and more equal, but it recognizes that its attempt is a pious wish, that it has set itself a tremendous task, that the chances of success are remote—if it rightly understood itself it would see that this could never be attained in the temporal existence; that even if this endeavor were carried on for a thousand years, it would never attain its goal. Christianity, on the contrary, by the help of the short cut of eternity, is immediately at the goal: it allows all the differences to continue, but it teaches the equality of eternity. It teaches everyone to *rise above* the earthly distinctions. Pay close attention to how equitably it speaks; it does not say that it is the humble who should lift himself up, while the mighty man should perhaps descend from his exalted position; ah, no, such a speech is not equitable. And the equality which is brought about by the mighty descending and the humble ascending, is not Christian equality, it is worldly equality. No, whether it was the one who stood highest, even if it were the king, he must *lift himself above* the differences of high place, and the beggar must *lift himself above* the difference of insignificance. Christianity always allows the differences of the earthly life to persist, but this equality in rising above earthly differences is implicit in the commandment of love, in the loving one's neighbor.

Because this is so, because the humble as completely as the distinguished and powerful, because every man in his own particular manner, may lose his soul by not being willing to rise above earthly differences in the Christian way, and, alas, because it happens in both and in the most diversified ways: therefore it happens that wishing to love the neighbor is frequently exposed to a double, moreover, a multiple danger. Everyone who has despairingly clung to one or another of life's earthly discriminations, so that his life is centered in it and not in God, he also demands that everyone who belongs in this same category, should ally with him—not in the good (for the good forms no union, unites neither two nor hundreds, nor all men together), but in an unholy union against the universal-human. The desperate call it treachery to wish to have fellowship with others, with all men. On the other side, those other men are again differentiated by other differences of the temporal existence, and then perhaps misunderstand it if some who do not belong to their class wish to unite with them. For as regarding the differences of the earthly life, there is strangely enough, due to misunderstanding, both strife and unity at the same time; one man wishes to do away with one difference, but he wishes to have another in its place. The difference

can, as the word says, indicate the great difference, the supreme difference; but everyone who contends against discrimination in such a way that he wishes to abolish one definite discrimination in order to substitute another, he indeed fights to maintain discriminations. Whoever, then, wishes to love his neighbor, consequently does not concern himself in abolishing this or that discrimination, or, from a worldly point of view, in doing away with all of them, but is devoutly concerned in interpenetrating his own difference with the saving thought of Christian equality: he easily becomes as one who does not fit into the earthly life, not even into the so-called Christendom; he easily becomes exposed to attack from all directions; he becomes like a lost sheep among ravening wolves. Everywhere he turns he meets natural differences (for as was said, no man is pure man, but the Christian rises above earthly differences); and those worldly ones who have clung fast to temporal differences, any of them would be like those who are ravening wolves.

Let us take some examples from the differences of the earthly life, in order to make the matter clear, and let us proceed very carefully. And may you only have the patience to read, as I devote my time and industry to writing; for since being an author is my sole occupation and my sole task, I both can and am in duty bound to employ a precise, a petty, if you will, but certainly also a rewarding carefulness which others are not able to, since in addition to being authors, they must also use their possibly longer day, their possibly richer gifts, their possibly greater skill in other ways.

It is true that the time is past when only the powerful and the distinguished were men, the others thralls and slaves. This is due to Christianity. But this does not imply that the powerful and the distinguished can no longer become a snare to a man, if he looks too long at these differences and harms his soul, forgetting what it means to love his neighbor. If this should take place, it must certainly happen in a more hidden and secret way than before, but at bottom it remains the same. Whether a man openly, enjoying his arrogance and his pride, indicates to other man that they do not exist for him, and desires for sustaining his arrogance that they should feel it when he demands the expression of slavish submission from them—or whether cunningly and secretly by avoiding every contact with them (possibly also for fear lest the manifestation of his arrogance might arouse them and become dangerous to him), he shows that they do not exist for him: at bottom these are one and the same thing. The inhuman and the un-Christlike is not determined by the way in which it is manifested, but by a man's wishing to disavow his kinship with all men, with every man unconditionally. Alas, alas, to keep one's self unspotted from the world is the problem and teaching of Christianity—God grant that we may all accomplish it! But to

cling in worldliness to this inhumanity, as if it were the most glorious of all differences, just that is defilement. For it is not the rough labor that defiles—if it is performed in purity of heart; and it is not humble circumstances which defile—if you reverently take pride in living quietly; but silk and ermine can defile, if they cause a man to injure his soul. It is defilement if the humble so shrinks from his misery that he does not have the courage to wish to be edified by the Christian teaching; but it is also defilement when the distinguished man so swaddles himself in his distinction that he shrinks from being edified by the Christian teaching. And it is also defilement if one whose distinction consists in being as most people are, never overcomes this difference in Christian elevation.

So this distinguished depravity wishes to teach the distinguished man that he exists only for the distinguished; that he must live solely in their restricted circle, that he must not exist for other men, just as these must not exist for him. But take care, it says, he must know how to do this as easily and adroitly as possible, so that it may not provoke men, that is to say, the secret and the art consist precisely in keeping this secret to himself. The avoiding of contact with others must not seem to be intended, nor must it be done in an obvious way, which would attract attention; no, it must be done evasively, and consequently as cautiously as possible, in order to make sure that no one notices it, to say nothing of any one's taking offense at it. Therefore he must walk with downcast eyes (alas, but not in the Christian sense), when he mingles in the throngs of men; proudly—and yet stealthily, he must flee from one distinguished circle to another; he must not look at these other men—so that they will not look at him; he must conceal the interest in his eyes if he should meet a fellow creature or an even more distinguished man; his glance must waver vaguely, hesitantly, over all these men, so that no one may catch his eye to remind him of their kinship; he must never be seen among the humbler classes, at least never in their society, and if this cannot be avoided, then must he display an aristocratic condescension—yet in its lightest form—in order not to offend or excite; he must be ready to employ exaggerated courtesy toward the humbler classes, but he must never associate with them as equals for that would indicate that he was—human, but he is an—aristocrat. And if he can do this easily, skillfully, elegantly, evasively, and yet always preserve his secret (that other men do not exist for him, or he for them), then will the aristocratic snobbery vouch for him that he has—good form. Yes, the world has changed—and the form of snobbery has also changed; for it would still be overhasty if we were to believe that the world has become good because it has changed. If we imagine one of those proud, wayward figures who took pleasure in this ungodly sport of openly letting "those

men" feel their wretchedness, how astonished would he not be if he came to know how much caution had now become necessary in order to preserve this secret! Alas, but the world has changed; and gradually as the world changes, the forms of snobbish depravity become more cunning, more difficult to detect—but they truly do not become better.

Such is the aristocratic snobbery. And if there were a distinguished man whose life by birth and circumstances belonged to the same earthly classification, a distinguished man who would not consent to this conspiracy of dissension against common humanity, that is, against the neighbor; if he could not find it in his heart to consent to it, if he, perceiving very well the results of this conspiracy, still trusted to God to give him strength to endure these things, while he did not have the strength—to harden his heart: experience might well teach him what he risked. First the aristocratic snobbishness would accuse him of treason and selfishness—because he wished to love his neighbor; for maintaining his connection with snobbery would be love and loyalty and sincerity and devotion. And if then, as so often happens, the lower class, in turn, from the standpoint of their differences, misunderstood and misjudged him, him—who did not belong to their synagogue, rewarded him with mockery and insults—because he wished to love his neighbor: then, indeed, he would stand there in a twofold danger. Had he been willing to place himself at the head of the lower classes—so that by means of a rebellion he might have swept away the class distinctions: then they might possibly have loved and honored him. But he did not wish to do this; he wished only to express what to him was a Christian need, the need to love his neighbor. And this was why his lot was so dubious; the twofold danger came from this.

Then the aristocratic snobbishness might exultantly ridicule him, derisively condemn him and say it served him right. It would use his name as a bugbear to prevent inexperienced aristocratic youth from straying away—from the "good form" of snobbishness. And many of the better men among the aristocrats, under the powerful influence of the "good form" of snobbishness, would not dare to defend him; would not risk being laughed at by the "counsel of the scornful," and this ridicule would reach its maximum if anyone were bold enough to defend him. Thus we might easily imagine that an aristocrat within the inspired circle of aristocrats might eloquently defend the idea of love to one's neighbor, but when it actually came to the point, he might not be able to subject his mind in obedience to the view he had perhaps successfully defended. However, to defend an opposing view within the partition wall of the differences, to defend behind this wall a view which, in the Christian sense (not in the sense of raising a rebellion), wishes to take the differences away, that is simply to preserve the differences. In

the company of the learned, or within a circle of associates which assures and emphasizes his distinction as such, the scholar might perhaps be willing to deliver an inspired lecture on the equality of all men; but that is simply maintaining the differences. In the company of the wealthy, in surroundings which simply make the advantages of wealth obvious, a rich man might perhaps be willing to make every concession about equality between men; but this also means preserving the differences. The distinguished man who might possibly victoriously succeed in overriding all objections arising in that exclusive company out of court, would perhaps snobbishly and cowardly avoid coming in contact with real objections to the differences. "Go with God!" We use this expression as a salutation—if that better-intentioned man among the distinguished, instead of proudly avoiding men, were to go out with God among men, then he would perhaps try to hide from himself—and consequently from God, what he got to see—but what God saw that He hid. That is, if one walks with God, then one certainly walks free from danger; but one is also compelled to see, and to see in a quite peculiar manner. When you walk in company with God, then you need see but one wretched man, and you will not be able to evade what Christianity wishes to have you understand, the human equality.

Alas, but perhaps that superior man would not quite dare risk having to endure this walking in company with God and the impression it made upon him; he would perhaps withdraw—while, nevertheless, that same evening in the exclusive society of his friends, he would again defend the Christian view of life. Moreover, this walking with God (and it is only in company with God that one discovers his "neighbor," for God is the middle term) for the sake of learning to know life and to know himself, is a serious walk. Then honor, power and glory lose their worldly glamor; in company with God you cannot take pleasure in worldliness. If you unite (for union is not always for the good) with some other men with a definite standing and position in life, even if it is only with your wife, then the worldly tempts you; even if it may not have great significance in your eyes, it tempts you comparatively in respect of persons; perhaps it tempts you for her sake. But when you walk with God, when you unite only with God, and in all that you understand, you understand that God is underneath: then you discover—shall I say to your own hurt?—then you discover your neighbor; then God compels you to love him—shall I say to your own hurt? For loving your neighbor is a thankless task.

It is one thing to let thought fight against thought; it is one thing to fight and conquer in a dispute; it is another thing to conquer one's self when one fights in the realities of life; for however closely one conflicting thought presses on the other in life, however closely one

contender presses on the other in a dispute, all this conflict is still carried on at a distance, like a battle in the air. On the other hand, this is a measure of a man's disposition, of what he is; how far it is from what he understands to what he does; how great a distance there is between his understanding and his actions. At bottom we all understand the highest things; a child, the simplest man, the wisest man, they all understand the highest things, and all understand the same things; for it is, if I dare say so, a lesson set for us all. But that which makes the difference is whether we understand it only remotely—so that we do not act accordingly; or near at hand—so that we do act accordingly, and "cannot do otherwise," cannot refrain from doing it, like Luther, who understood quite definitely what he had to do, when he said: "God help me, I cannot do otherwise. Amen."

At the distance of a quiet hour from all the turmoil of life and of the world, every man understands what the highest is; when he starts out, he has understood it. When life looks like fair weather to him, he still understands it: but when confusion begins, then the understanding flees, or it appears that this understanding was at a distance. To sit in a room where everything is so still that one can hear a grain of sand fall, and understand the highest, is something every man is able to do; but, speaking figuratively, for one to sit in a kettle while the coppersmith hammers upon it, and then to understand the same thing about the highest: to do this one must have his understanding in himself; otherwise it will appear that his understanding was at a distance—because he was absent-minded.

At the distance of a quiet hour from the turmoil of life, the child and the simplest man and the wisest man understand, and almost equally easily, what every man ought to do—what every man should do; but in the midst of life's confusion, when the only question is about what *he* will do, then it perhaps appears that that understanding was at a distance from him—was at the distance of humanity from him.

While a dispute is still remote from action, while the lofty resolutions are still awaiting action, while the solemn vows are unfulfilled and repentance still not proved, every man understands what the highest is. Within the habitual security of unchanged conditions, everyone can understand that a change is desirable, for this understanding is remote from the change. Is not the unchanged a tremendous distance from the change?

Alas, in the world there is perpetually the pressing question about what one can do and what one cannot do: eternity which speaks of the highest, calmly assumes that every man can achieve it, and therefore asks only whether he did so. From the height of his superior condescension, the great man understands equality between man and man. From the height of their mysterious superiority the scholar and the educated

man understand equality between man and man; granted a little advantageous concession, the man whose difference consists in being like most other people, understands equality between men—at a distance the neighbor is recognized by everyone: God alone knows how many really recognize him, that is, close by. And yet at a distance the neighbor is merely a figment of the imagination; he who is neighbor by virtue of being near by, is any man, unconditionally every man. At a distance the neighbor is a shadow who in imagination passes through every man's thought—but, alas, perhaps he did not discover that the man who at that very moment really did pass by him, was his neighbor. Everyone knows his neighbor at a distance, and yet it is impossible to see him at a distance; if you do not see him so close at hand that, before God, you see him unconditionally in every man, then you do not see him at all.

Let us now consider the differences in the lower classes. The times are past when what one calls the lower classes had no conception of themselves, or only the conception of being slaves, not merely poor men, but actually not even men. The wild rebellions, the horror which followed on horror, are perhaps also past; but I wonder if viciousness cannot therefore lie hidden in a man. If so, then the vicious inferiority complex will make the poor man imagine that he sees an enemy in the powerful and the rich, in everyone who is favored by some advantage. But caution, it says, for these enemies still have so much power that it might easily become dangerous to break with them. Therefore the hidden viciousness will not teach the poor man to raise a rebellion, or absolutely refuse every expression of deference, or let his secret become manifest; but it will teach him that the deference shall be expressed and still not expressed, expressed and yet expressed in such a way that the powerful will find no pleasure in it, while he is still not able to say that this homage is refused him. Therefore in this submission there must be a cunning defiance which secretly embitters, a reluctance which secretly says "no" to what the tongue affirms; a dissonance of suppressed envy in the jubilation which honors the powerful. There must be no force used which might become dangerous; there must be no breach which might become a source of danger; but a secret hidden bitterness, a remotely suspected, painful dejection must make the power and the honor and the distinction into a torment for the powerful, the honored, the distinguished man, who yet is not able to put his finger on any definite cause of complaint; for therein lies exactly the art and the secret of the resistance.

And if there was a poor man whose heart did not harbor this secret envy, and who was unwilling to permit this viciousness from without to get this power over him; a poor man who without being servilely submissive, without fear of man, modestly but above all gladly, gave every

advantage of the earthly life its due, happier and more joyful in the giving perhaps than the one frequently is and can be who will receive it: then he would also surely discover the twofold danger. His equals will perhaps thrust him out as a traitor, despise him as servilely minded; and those favored of fortune will, alas, perhaps misunderstand him and make fun of him as a boot-licker. What in the preceding relationship might be regarded as too belittling for the distinguished—to love his neighbor, would here be regarded as too presumptuous for the humble —to love his neighbor.

So perilous a task it is to wish to love one's neighbor. For there are still distinctions enough in the world; there are distinctions everywhere in the temporal existence, which is precisely the different, the manifold. Perhaps too a man may be successful by virtue of his own personality, in getting on well with all the differences in a gentle and complaisant agreement which strikes a little off from one place and so requires a little again in a different place: but the *equality of eternity*, the willing to love one's neighbor, *seems both too little and too much, and therefore, as applied to this love for the neighbor, does not really pertain to the relations of the earthly life.*

Imagine a man who arranged a banquet and to it invited the halt, the blind, the lame, the beggars: now far be it from me to think that the world would find this anything but beautiful, even if peculiar. But imagine that this man who gave the banquet had a friend to whom he said: "Yesterday I gave a great banquet"—is it not true that the friend would first and foremost wonder that he had not been among those invited? Then when he came to know who had been invited: then far be it from me to think that the friend would regard it as anything but beautiful, even if peculiar. Still he would wonder, and he would perhaps say: "It is a strange use of words to call such a gathering a banquet, a banquet—where your friends are not present, a banquet—where the question is not about the quality of the wine, the choice of the company, the number of servants who waited on the table," that is, the friend would think one might call such a feeding an act of charity, but not a banquet. For however good the food they received had been, even if it had not been merely as "strengthening and palatable" as that of charitable institutions, but had really been choice and costly, aye, even if they had received ten kinds of wine: the company itself, the idea of the whole affair, a certain something lacking, I know not what, would preclude calling such a gathering a banquet; it is contrary to custom—which draws distinctions. Suppose now that this man who had given the banquet, answered: "Then I still believe I had usage on my side; do we not read in Luke's Gospel these words of Christ: 'When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends nor thy brethren, nor

thy kinsmen nor thy rich neighbors: lest they also invite you again, and you receive recompense. But when thou makest a banquet, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind'; for here not only is the word 'banquet' used in this way, but at the beginning a less festal expression is used, 'the midday or the evening meal,' and not until the speech refers to inviting the poor and the crippled, is the word 'banquet' used. Does it not seem to you that it is as if Christ wished to indicate that to invite the poor and the lame is not only what we should do, but is also something far more festal than eating at midday or evening with friends and relatives and rich neighbors, which one ought not to call a banquet; for to invite the poor, that is really to give a banquet? But I perceive that our usage of words is different, for as commonly used, a list of those who are invited to a banquet is sufficient: friends, brothers, relatives, rich neighbors—who are able to reciprocate. But so scrupulous is the Christian equality and its usage, that it requires not only that you shall feed the poor, it requires that you shall call it a banquet. If, however, in actual daily life you wish to stand strictly on this usage, and do not think that in the Christian sense it is a matter of indifference under what name the meal is served to the poor, then will men laugh at you. But simply let them laugh, they laughed, too, at Tobias; for the fact of wishing to love one's neighbor is always exposed to a twofold danger, as we see from the example of Tobias. The ruler had forbidden under pain of death that he should bury the dead; but Tobias feared God more than the ruler, he loved the dead more than his own life: he buried him. This was the first danger. And then when Tobias dared this heroic deed—then 'his neighbors laughed at him.' That was the second danger. . . ." Thus spoke the man who gave the banquet. My hearer, does it not seem to you that he was right? But might there not be something else to object to in his conduct? For why so insistent on inviting *only* the halt and the poor, and, on the other hand, why take such pains, even almost defiantly, to omit to invite friends and relatives, when he might equally well have invited all? Undeniably. And if he was thus insistent, then we shall not commend him or his choice of words. But according to the words of the evangelist, the meaning is, however, that these others would not come. For that reason, too, the friend's surprise at not being invited also ceased as soon as he heard what company had been invited. Had the man, according to the friend's use of words, made a banquet and not invited him, then he would have been angry; but now he was not angry—for he would not have come anyway.

O my hearer, does it seem to you that what we have discussed here is only a dispute about the use of the word "banquet"? Or do you not see that the dispute is about loving your neighbor? For he who feeds the poor, but does not at the same time triumph over his own feelings

so that he may call this feeding a banquet, he sees in the poor and the humble only the poor and the humble; he who gives a "banquet," he sees in the poor and humble his neighbor—however laughable this may seem in the eyes of the world. Alas, for it is still not so unusual for us to hear complaints in the world against this or that man because he is not earnest; but the question is, what the world understands by earnestness, whether it does not almost understand by it the pressure of the worldly concern. And the question is whether the world through constantly confusing earnestness and vanity, is not, in spite of its earnestness, so facetious that if in the highest sense it became earnest enough to see from this that one should thereby set about it earnestly, the question is, whether the world would not quite involuntarily burst into laughter. So earnest is the world! If the many and complicated distinctions of the temporal existence did not make it equally as difficult to see whether one loves his neighbor as it is difficult to see "the man": then would the world always have cause for laughter—if there were otherwise a sufficient number of those who loved their neighbor.

To love the neighbor, while allowing the earthly difference to continue, is, as was here pointed out, essentially to wish to exist equally for every man unconditionally. Manifestly, merely wishing to exist for other men in proportion to the advantages provided by earthly distinctions, is pride and presumption; but the clever idea of not being willing to exist at all for others, in order secretly to enjoy the advantage of distinction in union with equals, is cowardly pride. In both cases there is dissension; but he who loves his neighbor is calm. He is calm through being satisfied with the conditions of the earthly life assigned to him, be they those of distinction or of poverty, and for the rest, he allows every earthly distinction to retain its power, and to pass for what it is and ought to be here in this life. For you shall not covet that which is your neighbor's, not his wife, nor his ass, and hence not that advantageous position vouchsafed to him in life. If it is denied you, then you should still be glad that it was granted to him. In this way one who loves his neighbor is reassured; he does not servilely avoid the more influential men, but he loves his neighbor; nor is he supercilious to the humble, but he loves his neighbor, and wishes essentially to live equally for all men, whether he is actually known by many or not. It is undeniably a considerable wing-stretch, but it is not a proud flight which soars above the world; it is the humble and difficult flight of self-denial near the earth. It is far easier and far more comfortable to creep through life by living in more aristocratic seclusion, if one is a distinguished man, or in inconspicuous privacy if one is poor; moreover, one may, however strange it is, even seem to accomplish more by this surreptitious mode of life, simply because one exposes himself to much less opposi-

tion. But even if it is so pleasant for flesh and blood to avoid opposition, I wonder if it is also consoling in the hour of death? In the hour of death the only adequate consolation is that one has not evaded life, but has endured it. What a man shall accomplish or not accomplish, does not lie in his power to decide; he is not the One who will guide the world; he has only to obey. Everyone has, therefore, first and foremost (instead of asking which place is most comfortable for him, which connection is the most advantageous to him), to assure himself on the question of where Providence can use him, if it so pleases Providence. The point consists precisely in loving his neighbor, or, what is essentially the same thing, in living equally for every man. Every other point of view is a contentious one, however advantageous and comfortable and apparently significant this position may be. Providence cannot use one who has placed himself there, for he is plainly in rebellion against Providence. But he who duly took that overlooked, that despised and disdained place, without insisting on his earthly rights, without attaching himself to just one single man, essentially existing equally for all men, he will, even though he apparently achieves nothing, even if he becomes exposed to the derision of the poor, or to the ridicule of his superiors, or to both insult and ridicule, yet in the hour of death, he will confidently dare say to his soul: "I have done my best; whether I have accomplished anything, I do not know; whether I have helped anyone, I do not know; but that I have lived for them, that I do know, I know it from the fact that they insulted me. And this is my consolation, that I shall not have to take the secret with me to the grave, that I, in order to have good and undisturbed and comfortable days in life, have denied my kinship to other men, kinship with the poor, in order to live in aristocratic seclusion, or with the distinguished, in order to live in secret obscurity."

So let the one who, by the help of his associations and by not living for all men, accomplished so much, look well to it that death does not alter his life for him when it reminds him of his responsibility. For he who did his best to make men attentive, the humble or the distinguished, he who in his teaching, acting, striving, lived equally for all, he is not responsible if men, by persecuting him, showed—that they had become attentive. He has no responsibility, no, he has even benefited, for the condition through which one might derive benefit is always, first and foremost, that one become attentive. But the one who in cowardice would only exist within the partition wall of associations where he would accomplish so very much and gain so many advantages; the one who in cowardice dared not attract the attention of men, the poor or the rich, because he suspected that the attention of men was a dubious good—if one has something true to communicate; the one who in cowardice car-

ried on his famous activities within the security of respect for persons: he bears the responsibility—that he did not love his neighbor. If such a one were to say: "Well, what good does it do to plan one's life according to such a standard?" then I should answer: "How do you think this excuse will help you in eternity?"

For the command of eternity is infinitely higher than any clever excuse. I wonder, too, if a single one of those whom Providence has used as instruments in the service of truth (and let us not forget that every man should and ought to be so used, at least he ought to plan his life so that he might become an instrument) has ever planned his life in any other way than for existing equally for every man. No such man has ever joined himself in alliance with the poor or with the distinguished, but has lived equally for the distinguished and the humblest. Truly, only through loving one's neighbor can a man accomplish the highest; for the highest consists in being capable of being used as an instrument in the hand of Providence. But as was said, everyone who has placed himself at some other point, everyone who forms parties and factions, or joins such, he steers on his own responsibility, and all his achievement, even if it were the transformation of the world, is a delusion. Nor will he have great joy from it in eternity, for it is certainly possible that Providence might make use of it, but, alas, it would not have used him as an instrument; he was a self-willed, a conceited man, and Providence also uses the efforts of such a man by accepting his difficult labor and letting him lose the reward.

However laughable, however slow, however inexpedient, loving one's neighbor may seem to the world, it is still the highest act a man is able to accomplish. But *the highest* has never quite fitted into the relations of the earthly life, *it is both too little and too much.*

Look sometime at the world which lies before you in all its diversified manifestations; it is as when you look at a stage, except that the variety is far, far greater. Every individual of this innumerable multitude is someone in particular through his difference from others; he represents something definite, but essentially he is something different. However, you do not get to see this in life; here you see only what the individual represents and how he does it. It is as it is in a play. But when the curtain falls on the stage, then the one who played the king and the one who played the beggar, and so on severally, they are all much alike, all one and the same: actors. And when in death the curtain has fallen on the stage of reality (for this is an ambiguous expression, if we speak about the curtain being rolled up on the stage of eternity in the moment of death, for eternity is not a stage, it is truth), then they too are all one, they are men, they are all what they essentially were, which you did not see because of their differences; you see that

they are men. The professional theater is an enchanted world; but imagine some evening that through a general absent-mindedness, the players all became confused so that they believed they actually were what they represented: would this not be what we might call, in contrast to the artistic enchantment, the enchantment of an evil spirit, a black art? And so too if in the enchantment of reality (for we are all under this spell through being fascinated by its differences) our fundamental ideas became confused, then would we believe that we essentially are what we represent. Alas, but is this not exactly the case? That the differences of life are only like the player's costumes, or like a traveling cloak which everyone ought to take care of and see that the strings with which this overgarment is fastened are loosely tied, and particularly not in hard knots, so that when the time comes to change, it may easily be thrown off: this seems to be forgotten. And yet we all have artistic understanding enough to be critical, if at the moment when he should cast off his outer garment, the player has to run off the stage to get the strings untied. Alas, but in actual life one fastens the upper garment of his difference so tightly that it completely conceals the fact that this difference is an outer garment, because the inner glory of the likeness to others never or so very infrequently shines through, as it nevertheless should and ought to do. For the player's art is the delusive one, the art of make-believe, the art of deceiving and being deceived on an equally large scale; therefore we must not be able or wish to see the player through the costume; therefore it represents the highest art when the player becomes identical with the character he represents, because this is the supreme delusion. But the reality of life, even if it is not, like eternity, the truth, ought to be truthful, and therefore the other man, who everyone essentially is, ought always to be glimpsed through the disguise. Alas, but in actual life, the individual in his temporal growth grows together with the temporal differences; this is the opposite of the growth of eternity which grows away from the differences; every such individual is crippled, is in the sense of eternity a deformity. Alas, in real life the individual grows fast to his differences, so that at last death must use force to tear them away from him.

Nevertheless, if one is truly to love his neighbor, he must remember every moment that the difference between them is only a disguise. For, as was said, Christianity has not wished to storm forth to abolish the differences, neither those of distinction nor of humbleness, nor has it wished in a worldly sense to effect a worldly agreement between the differences; but it wants the difference to hang loosely about the individual, loosely, like the cape the king casts off to reveal himself; loosely, like the ragged cloak in which a supernatural being has concealed itself. When the difference hangs thus loosely, then that essential other is

always glimpsed in every individual, that common to all, that eternal resemblance, the equality. If it were this way, if every individual lived in this way, then would the temporal existence have attained its highest point. It cannot be like eternity; but this expectant solemnity, which, without halting the course of life, renews itself every day through the eternal and through the equality of eternity, every day saves its soul from the differences in which it still continues: this would be the reflection of eternity. Then you would indeed see the ruler in real life, gladly and respectfully offer him your homage; but you would, nevertheless, see in him the inner glory, the equality of glory which his magnificence merely conceals. You would indeed see the beggar, perhaps in your sorrow for him suffering more than he, but you would still see in him the inner glory, the equality of glory, which his shabby cloak conceals. Moreover, wherever you turned your eyes, you would see your neighbor. For there neither is nor has there ever been from the beginning of the world, a man who was a neighbor in the same sense as a king is a king, a scholar a scholar, your relative your relative, that is, in particular, or what amounts to the same thing, in the sense of discrimination; no, every man is your neighbor. In being king, beggar, scholar, rich, poor, man, woman and so on, we do not resemble one another, for just therein lie our differences; but in being a neighbor we all unconditionally resemble one another. The difference is the confusion of the temporal existence which marks every man differently, but the neighbor is the mark of the eternal—on every man. Take a number of sheets of paper; write something different on each of them so that they do not resemble each other; but then take again each individual sheet, do not be confused by the different inscriptions, hold it up to the light, and then you see a common mark in them all. And so the neighbor is the common mark, but you see it only by the light of the eternal, when it shines through the differences.

My hearer, there can certainly be no doubt that this must seem glorious to you, that it must constantly appear thus to you, whenever in quiet exaltation of spirit you allow the thought of the eternal to counsel you, and give yourself up to meditation; only then are you near this understanding. Oh, but might this not seem so glorious to you that for your part you would decide to make this agreement with God; that you wish to unite with Him in order to maintain this understanding, that is, to express in your life that with Him you will maintain this understanding as the only true understanding, whatever may befall you because of it, even if it should cost you your life; that with God you will hold it fast as your victory over all indignities and injuries. Remember that he, who in truth chose the one thing needful, wished the

truly good, he has this blessed consolation that one suffers but once, but one conquers eternally.

Lo, the poet knows how to say much about the beginning of love, about what an ennobling power loving and being loved exercises over a man; about the transfiguration which penetrates his whole being; about what a heavenly difference, according to the poet, there is between one who is in love and one who has never felt the transforming power of love. Oh, the true consecration is nevertheless the one which surrenders all claims on life, all claims to power and honor and advantage, all claims—but the happiness of love and friendship are indeed the strongest claims—hence which surrenders all claims, in order to understand what a tremendous claim God and eternity have upon one's self. He who will accept this understanding is prepared to love his neighbor. A man's life begins with the illusion that a long, long time and a whole world lie before him, and he begins with the foolish conceit that he has plenty of time for all his many claims. The poet is the eloquent, inspired advocate of this foolish but beautiful conceit. But when in the infinite transformation a man discovers the eternal so near to life that there is not a single one of its claims, not a single one of its evasions, not a single one of its excuses, not a single one of its moments at a distance from what *he must do* at this very moment, this very second, this very instant: then he is in the way of becoming a Christian. The sign of childishness is to say: *"Me wants, me—me"*; the sign of youth is to say: *"I,"*—and *"I"*—and *"I"*; the sign of maturity and the introduction to the eternal is to will to understand that this "I" signifies nothing if it does not become the "thou" to whom eternity unceasingly speaks, and says: "Thou *shalt*, thou shalt, thou shalt." The youth wishes to be the only "I" in the whole world; maturity consists in understanding this "thou" for itself, even if it is not said to any other single man. Thou shalt, thou shalt love thy neighbor. O my hearer, it is not *you* to whom *I* speak; it is to me, to whom eternity says: "Thou shalt."

III

A. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW

Love is the fulfilling of the law.—ROMANS 13:10

TO promise is honest, but to keep it is difficult," says the proverb; but by what right? It is manifestly the keeping of a promise that is honest, and in that the proverb is right, that the keeping of a promise is honest and also difficult. But what is promising? The proverb, in the words quoted, says nothing about what a promise is; perhaps then a promise is nothing at all; perhaps it is less than nothing. Perhaps the proverb is even warning against promising, as if it would say: waste no time in promising; the keeping a promise, which is the honorable thing, is certainly difficult. And truly, the promising is certainly far from being honesty, even when the promise is by no means dishonestly intended. Should one not hesitate to give "the fact of promising" the name of honesty, hesitate in a world which deceitfully promises so much, in a generation which is only too inclined to promise and honestly deceives itself in promising? Should one not hesitate for the sake of the proverb itself, since there is another proverb which worldly men are also familiar with and know from experience, that "A penny loaned," if—according to the promise—it is repaid, "is a penny found"? One might rather go to the opposite extreme and say that promising is dishonest, assuming that the characteristic of true trustworthiness is precisely that it does not make promises, that it wastes no time in promising, does not flatter itself by promising, and then claim a twofold credit, first for promising, and then for the fulfillment of the promise. Nevertheless, one may prefer to try to center the attention exclusively and decisively upon the keeping the promise, while, as a preamble, a stimulating and authoritative reminder warns against promising.

There is a parable found in the Holy Scriptures which is but rarely referred to in the godly discourse, and which, nevertheless, is very instructive and stimulating. Let us consider it a little. There was a man "who had two sons"; therein he resembles the father of the prodigal son, who also had two sons. Moreover, the resemblance between these two fathers is even greater; for one of the sons of the father of whom we are speaking was also a prodigal son, as we shall learn from the story. The father went to the first and said: "Son, go out and work today in my vineyard." But he answered and said: "I will not"; but afterward he repented and went. And the father went to the other son and said likewise. But he answered and said, "Lord, I go," and he did not go. Which of the two did the father's will? We might also ask it in another way, "Which of these two was the prodigal son?" I wonder if

it was not the one who said "yes," the obedient one, who not only said "yes," but said, "Lord, I will," as if to show his unconditional, obedient submission to his father's will. I wonder if it was not the one who said "yes," who was secretly lost, so that no notoriety attached to him as there did to that prodigal son who wasted his substance on harlots, and ended by herding swine, but who also ended by being reformed. I wonder if the one who said "yes" does not conspicuously resemble that brother of the prodigal son whose righteousness is made suspect in the Gospel, although he regarded himself as the righteous, or the good son; so, too, this brother (we have in our language a peculiar expression which for the sake of brevity we might use about him), this "yes-brother," regarded himself as being the good son—did he not say "yes," did he not say, "Lord, I go"?—and as the proverb says, it is honest to promise! The other brother, on the contrary, said "no." Such a "no," which still implies that one will do precisely what one said "no" to, may sometimes be caused by an inexplicable peculiarity. An honesty exiled and alien to the earth sometimes hides itself in such a simulated negation, whether because the speaker is so disgusted with repeatedly hearing the "yes," which signifies that one will not do what one says, that he has accustomed himself to saying "no" where others say "yes," in order to do then what the yes-brother leaves undone; or it is because the speaker has a troubled mistrust of himself, and therefore avoids promising anything, lest he promise too much. Or is it because the speaker, in a sincere zeal for doing good, wishes to abjure the hypocritical appearance of a promise? Still, in the Gospel this "no" is not mentioned in any way except as being intended to show that it really was disobedience on the part of the son; but he repents and goes out and does his father's will.

But I wonder if what the parable wishes to emphasize is not how dangerous it is to be overprecipitate in saying "yes," even if it is intended to mean "in a moment." The yes-brother is not represented as one who *was* a deceiver when he said "yes," but as one who *became* a deceiver because he did not keep his promise, and, still more exactly, as one who just through his readiness in promising became a deceiver —that is to say, his promise became a snare. If he had not promised anything, he would perhaps have been quicker to do it. When one says "yes," or promises something, then one so easily deceives himself and also easily deceives others, as if one had already done what he had promised, or as if by promising, he had already done some part of what he had promised to do, or as if the promise in itself was something meritorious. And then if one still does not do what he promised, then the road becomes very long before he comes back to the truth again, and only makes a beginning by still doing a little of what he

had promised. Alas, what he had promised to do was perhaps complicated enough, but now, through the unfulfilled promise, he finds himself at an illusory distance from the beginning. It is now no longer as it was at the moment when he lost his way, and instead of beginning on the labor, swung about by the aid of the promise. He must traverse the whole circuitous way back before he again reaches the beginning. On the contrary, the way from having said "no," the way through repentance to making good again, is much shorter and easier to find. The "yes" of the promise is soporific, but the "no" uttered and hence heard by one's self is arousing, and repentance really not far away. He who says, "Lord, I will," immediately seems virtuous in his own eyes; he who says "no" becomes almost afraid of himself. But this difference is very significant in the first moment, and very critical in the second; yet the first moment is the judgment of the immediate, the second moment is the judgment of eternity. That is why the world is so given to making promises, for the worldly is the immediate, and a promise at first looks so good. That is precisely why eternity is suspicious of promises, as it is suspicious of everything immediate. If we assume that neither of the brothers went and did his father's will, then he who said "no" was still nearer to doing it, inasmuch as he at least *realized* that he was not doing his father's will. A "no" does not conceal anything, but a "yes" so easily becomes a delusion, a self-deception, which of all difficulties is perhaps the hardest to overcome.

Oh, it is only too true that the "way to perdition is paved with good intentions," and it is certain that the most dangerous thing of all is for a man to backslide by the aid of good intentions, that is, by the way of promises. It is so hard to realize that it actually is retrogression. When a man turns his back and goes away, then it is easy to see that he is going away; but if a man hits on the idea of turning his face toward that from which he is going away, hits upon the idea of going backwards, while with face and glance and voice he greets one, protesting again and again that he is coming at once, or even saying incessantly, "Here I am"—although, mind you, he is withdrawing farther and farther backward: then it is not so easy to realize it. And so, too, with the one who, rich in good intentions and swift to promise, withdraws farther and farther from the good. Aided by good intentions and promises, his direction is toward the good, he is turned toward the good, and yet with this tendency toward the good, he yet is going back farther and farther away from the good. Every time he renews his intention and his promise, it looks as if he took a step forward, and yet he does not merely remain stationary, but he actually takes a step backward.

The vain intention, the unfulfilled promise, leaves a despondency, a dejection, which perhaps soon blazes up again in an even more fiery pur-

pose, only to die away again in an even greater languor. As a drinker constantly needs stronger and stronger stimulation—to become intoxicated, so he who forfeits his promises and good intentions constantly needs greater incitement—in order to go backward. We do not commend the son who said "no," but we endeavor to learn from the Gospel how dangerous it is to say, "Lord, I will." A promise may be compared to the dealing with a changeling—caution is needed. Just at the moment the child is born, when the mother's joy is greatest because her suffering is past, when just because of her joy she is perhaps less perceptive, then, as the superstitious believe, a hostile power comes and leaves a changeling in place of her child. And at the great but also dangerous moment of beginning, when one ought to begin, then comes the hostile power and slips the changeling promise into one's hand, preventing one from actually making the beginning. Ah, how many have not been deceived in this way, deceived by the changeling promise!

That is why it is so important for a man in all his relations, in his every task, immediately to center his complete undivided attention upon the essential and the decisive. So too with love, so that it may not at any time acquire the power to seem other than it is, or the changeling appearance be able to establish itself firmly and become a snare. For love does not come to have a good time, or to amuse itself with flattering conceits, but it is immediately in line with the task and is forced to understand that every previous moment was a wasted moment and more than merely wasted time, that any other expression of it is retardation and retrogression. This is exactly expressed in the words of our text:

LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW,

and we shall now make these words the subject of our reflection.

Hence if someone asks, "What is love?", Paul answers: "It is the fulfillment of the law," and any further questioning is immediately halted by that answer. For the law is already a complicated matter, but to fulfill it—moreover, you yourselves perceive that if this is to be accomplished, then there is not a moment to waste. The world has certainly many times asked out of curiosity, "What is love?" and as many times there has been some idler who by answering joined himself with the curious, and these two, curiosity and idleness, liked each other so much that they almost tired each other out in asking and answering questions. But Paul pays no attention to the questioner, least of all to the difficulties; on the contrary, by his answer he catches the questioner in obedience under the law; by his answer he immediately gives the direction and gives the impetus to act accordingly. This is not only the case with this answer of Paul's, but it is true of all Paul's answers and

with all of Christ's answers; this method of replying, swinging far away from the direction of the question in order immediately to bring the task the questioner has to perform as near to life as possible, is simply characteristic of the Christian method.

That simple wise man of antiquity who by encouraging the pursuit of knowledge doomed paganism, he understood the art of asking questions; he knew how through his questions to ensnare in the web of their ignorance those who answered. But the Christian who does not restrict himself to knowledge alone but to action, is peculiarly able to answer and by his answer to commit everyone to the task. This was why it was so dangerous for the Pharisees and the sophists and the hairsplitters and the dialecticians to question Christ; for the questioner always received an answer, but through the answer he also learned in a certain sense far too much; he received an embarrassing answer which did not cleverly elaborate on the question, but which seized upon the questioner with divine authority and pledged him to act in accordance with it, whereas the questioner perhaps had only wished to satisfy his curiosity or his inquisitiveness or to define his own ideas, while keeping at a distance from himself and from—doing the truth. How many have not asked, "What is truth?" and have secretly hoped that it would be a long time before the truth came so close to them that it would in that very moment decide what it was their duty to do at once. When the Pharisee "in order to justify himself" asked, "Who is my neighbor?", he certainly thought that it would call for a very long investigation, that it would perhaps require a very long time, and even then perhaps would end with the admission that it would be impossible to define with absolute accuracy the concept "neighbor"—and this was exactly why he had asked the question, in order to find an excuse for wasting time, in order to justify himself. But God takes the wise in their own foolishness, and Christ took the questioner captive in the answer which included the task.

And so with every answer of Christ. He does not warn against unprofitable questions by long, tiresome speeches which only breed quarrels and evasions, for the long elaborate speech would not be much better than the one it is designed to counteract. No, as He taught, so too He answers with divine authority, for the authority simply consists in setting the task. The hypocritical questioner got the answer he deserved, but not the one he desired. He did not get an answer which would encourage curiosity, nor one he could run with, for the reply has the remarkable quality that when it is spoken it at once commits the individual to whom it is spoken unequivocally to the task. Even if someone presumptuously wished to repeat one or another of Christ's answers, merely as an anecdote, it is no good, it cannot be done; the answer catches by making the one to whom it is repeated responsible for the

task. In the case of a clever answer which appeals to human ingenuity, it is of no consequence who has said it or to whom it was said. Every answer of Christ has exactly the opposite quality, which is, however, two-edged: it is infinitely important that it is Christ who has said it, and when it is said to an individual, it is precisely to *him* that it is said, the whole eternal emphasis is on that *him*, even if in a way it is said to all individuals. Human ingenuity is introspective, and inasmuch as it is blind, it is ignorant of whether anyone looks at it or not, and whether anyone comes close enough to look at it; the divine authority, on the contrary, is like the pure eye; it first compels the accused to see with whom he is talking, and then it fixes its piercing glance upon him and with this glance it says: "It is you to whom this is said." Therefore men will readily have dealings with ingenuity and intellectuality, for one can play blindman's buff with them, but they are afraid of authority.

And this is why men will perhaps not so readily have anything to do with Paul's answer, which, as was said, is ensnaring. As soon as anything else is said in answer to the question about what love is, then there is also time, an interval, an idle moment, which then becomes a concession to curiosity and idleness and selfishness. But if love is the fulfillment of the law, then there is no time for a promise—for the fact of promising is here used as an expression for the last thing which wishes to turn love in the wrong direction away from doing, away from *immediately* beginning upon the task; the promise lies exactly at the beginning, and resembles it deceptively, yet without being the beginning. Therefore even if this promise about love were not so apt to be a momentary excitement, which in the next moment is a disappointment, an immediate blazing up which leaves a languor behind, a springing forward which leads backward, an anticipation which delayingly retards, an introduction which does not lead to the matter—even if all this were not so, the promise is still a dwelling upon love, a dreaming or gratifying or light-minded or conceited dwelling upon love, as if it must first collect itself, or consider itself, or as if it wondered at itself, or at what it was able to do; the promise is a dwelling on love, and therefore a jest, a jest which may become dangerous, for taken earnestly love is the fulfillment of the law. But the Christian love which gives everything away, has just for that reason nothing to give away, no moment and no promise. Still this love is not a busyness, least of all a worldly busyness, and worldliness and busyness are now inseparable ideas. For what does it mean to be busy? We generally think that the way in which a man occupies himself determines whether he can be called busy. But this is not so. It is only within more narrow limitations that the manner of occupation is decisive, that is, not until the object of the occupation is determined. He who occupies himself only with the eternal, uninter-

ruptedly, at every moment, if this were possible, is not busy. Hence the one who really occupies himself with the eternal is never busy. To be busy is, dividedly and distractedly (which follows from the object of the occupation) to occupy one's self with the whole manifold, in which it is absolutely impossible for a man to be undivided, undivided as a whole, and undivided in any individual part of the whole, which only the insane succeed in doing. To be busy is dividedly and distractedly to occupy one's self with that which makes a man divided and distracted. But Christian love, which is the fulfillment of the law, is completely and undividedly present in its every utterance; and yet it is perpetually active; it is, consequently, just as far from being idleness as it is from being busyness. It never takes up something in advance and gives a promise instead of acting; it never satisfies itself by making believe that it has finished the task; never lingers with enjoyment on itself; never sits idly wondering about itself. It is not that hidden, secret, mysterious feeling behind the lattice of the inexplicable which the poet wishes to lure to his window; not a mood of the soul which fondly knows no law, wishes to know none, or wishes to make its own law, and only listen for the songs: it is sheer action, and each of its deeds is sacred, for it is the fulfillment of the law.

Such is the ideal Christian love; even if it does not or did not manifest itself in this way in any man (while yet every Christian by continuing in love, strives that his love may become such), it still was true in Him who was love, in our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore the same apostle says about Him, that "Christ was the end of the law." What the law could not bring to pass, any more than it could save a man, that Christ could do. Whereas the law, therefore, through its demand became the destruction of everyone, because they were not able to fulfill it, and only through it learned to know sin: Christ became the destruction of the law, because He was what it demanded, its destruction, its end; for when the demand is fulfilled, the demand exists only in the fulfillment, but hence it no longer exists anywhere as demand. As thirst when it is quenched exists only in the relief which follows the refreshment, so Christ did not come to abolish the law, but to perfect it, so that from this time forth it exists in its perfection.

Moreover, He was love, and His love was the fullness of the law. "No one could convict Him of any sin," not even the law which knows every conscience; "there was no deceit in His mouth," but everything in Him was truth; there was in His love not the hairsbreadth of a moment, of an emotion, of an interval between His purpose and the demand of the law for its fulfillment. He did not say "no," like that one brother, or "yes," like the other brother, for His meat was to do His Father's will;

thus He was one with the Father, one with every demand of the law, so its perfecting was a necessity to Him, His sole need in life.

The love in Him was perpetually active; there was no moment, not one single instant in His whole life when His love was merely a passive feeling which seeks expression while it lets time pass; or a mood which produces a self-satisfaction and dwells on itself while the task is neglected. No, His love was expressed in perpetual activity; even when He wept, was this not redeeming the time? For not even Jerusalem knew what belonged to its peace, but He knew; if those who stood at the grave of Lazarus sorrowing did not know what was about to happen, He knew what He would do. His love was as completely present in His least as in His greatest acts; it rallied itself no more strongly in some single great moment than in the hours of daily life outside the demands of the law. It was equally present at every moment, not greater when He breathed His last upon the Cross than when He let Himself be born. It was the same love which said, "Mary has chosen the better part," and the same love which with a glance rebuked—or forgave, Peter. It was the same love when He accepted His disciples who gladly left their homes to perform miracles in His name, and the same love when He found them sleeping. There was in His love no demand upon any other man, not on another man's time or strength or assistance or reciprocal love; for what Christ demanded of him was solely the other man's good, and He demanded that only for the sake of the other man. No man lived with Him who loved Him as deeply as Christ loved him. There was in His love no bargaining, no indulgent, partial agreement with any man except the agreement which was to Him the infinite demand of the law. There was in the love of Christ no exemption demanded for Him, not the poorest, not a farthing's worth.

His love recognized no differences, not the tenderest between His mother and other men, for He pointed to His disciple and said, "This is my mother." Again His love made no difference between His disciples, for His sole wish was that everyone should become His disciple, and He wished this for their own sakes. And again His love made no difference between the disciples, for His divine-human love was exactly the same to all men, in wishing to save them all, and equally for all men, who would allow themselves to be saved.

His life was pure love, and yet this whole life was only a single working day; He did not rest *until* the night came when He *could* no longer work; His labor did not cease with the changes of day and night, for when He was not working, then He watched in prayer. Thus was He the fulfillment of the law. And for a reward He demanded nothing, for His only requirement, His only purpose throughout His whole life from birth to death, was to sacrifice Himself as an innocent victim—which

not even the law in its most extreme demand—dared to demand. Thus was He the fulfillment of the law. The only one privy to His life, as it were, who was even able to follow Him, who was attentive enough and sleepless enough to follow Him, was the law itself, which followed Him step by step, hour by hour, with its infinite demand; but He was the fulfillment of the law.

How poverty-stricken never to have loved! Oh, but the man who became richest through his love, how poor was not all his wealth of love in comparison with this fullness! And yet, not so. Let us never forget that there is an everlasting difference between Christ and every Christian; even if the law has been done away with, it still stands in power and fixes an everlasting yawning gulf between the God-man and every other man, who cannot even understand, but who can only believe what the divine law must admit, that He was the fulfillment of the law. Every Christian believes this and appropriates it in believing, but no one has known it except the law and He who was the fulfillment of the law. For what weakness in a man is present in his strongest moment, that weakness far more strongly and yet proportionately would be present at every moment—that fact a man can understand only in his strongest moment, but the next moment he cannot understand it; and that is why he must believe and cling to his faith, so that his life may not become confused through being able to understand at one moment, but not being able to understand at many other moments.

Christ was the fulfillment of the law. From Him we should learn how to understand this thought, for He was the *explanation*, and only when the explanation *is* what it explains, when the one who explains it *is* the thing explained, when the explanation *is* the transfiguration, only then is there the right relationship. Alas, if we are not able to explain in this way; for if we can do nothing else, we can learn from this, humility before God. The frailty of our earthly life must divide it into explaining and being explained, and this, our weakness, is an essential expression of our own attitude toward God. Let a man, humanly speaking, love God in all sincerity of heart, ah, God has first loved him, God is an eternity ahead—so far is the man behind. And so with every task of eternity. When a man finally comes to begin, what an infinite time has not already been wasted, even if for a moment we forget all the deficiencies, all the imperfections in the struggle which has finally begun! Let a man, humanly speaking, aspire first in all sincerity of heart to the kingdom of God and His righteousness, yet how long a time elapsed before he merely learned to understand this in the right way, and hence how infinitely long before he first aspired to the kingdom of God and His righteousness! And so at every point, before every human beginning, there is wasted time. We are accustomed to speak concerning worldly

conditions, about the distressing fact that in order to prepare himself for some career, a man often must run in debt; in the God-relationship, man begins with an infinite debt, even if we forget how that debt increases daily after the beginning. Only too often this is forgotten in our daily life, and why should it be unless it is because God too is forgotten? So one man measures himself by another, and the one who has understood more than the other prides himself on being something. Oh, that he might himself understand that before God he is nothing. And since men are now so anxious to be something, what wonder that they, however much they talk about God's love, are so reluctant to have anything to do with Him, just because His demand and His standards make them into nothing.

For use one tenth part of the strength that is yours when you exert it to the uttermost, then turn your back on God, compare yourself with men—and in a very short time you will be distinguished among men. But turn around, turn toward God, use ten tenth parts of your strength, torture if possible every last makeshift into your service—and you will still be as nothing, at an infinite distance from having gained anything, in an infinite debt to God! Lo, therefore we have a right to say that in a certain sense it does not help to speak to a man about the highest, because a revolution must precede it, absolutely different from that which any speech can produce. If, for instance, you wish to have good times and easily get to be something, then forget God, never really notice Him, nor allow yourself to understand clearly that it was He who created you from nothing; start with the presupposition that a man has no time to waste in considering the One to whom he infinitely and unconditionally owes everything. Nor would one man be justified in asking another about it; hence, let it be forgotten, and shout in chorus with the multitude, laugh or weep, be busy from morning to night; be loved and respected and esteemed as friend, as officer, as king, as pallbearer; above all, be a serious man through having forgotten the only serious matter, that of maintaining your relation to God by becoming nothing. Oh, but consider then—still it does no good to talk, but God grant that you may understand what you lost, so that this annihilation before God may be blessed in such a way that you again retrace your way back to this annihilation every moment more strongly, more fervently, more inwardly than the blood returns to the place from which it was forced out. But to worldly wisdom this is and must be the greatest folly. Therefore never cling to God (for we must speak so, if in so many words we would reveal the secret of the indecision which with lying words also pretends to cling to God), "never cling to God, for by clinging to Him you lose what no man who clung to the world ever lost, not even the man who lost most—you uncondi-

tionally lose everything." And this is true, for the world truly cannot take everything, simply because it cannot give everything; only God who takes everything, everything, everything—in order to give everything, who does not take piecemeal little or much, or immeasurably much, but infinitely everything, only God can do this, if you truly cling to Him. "Therefore, flee from Him! A king may certainly be dangerous to approach, if you wish to be something, the proximity of a powerfully endowed spirit is dangerous, but God is infinitely more dangerous to approach."

Still, if God is left out and forgotten, then I do not know what meaning there can be in such an expression, or what meaning other than arrant nonsense there could be in any talk about this expression: that love is the fulfillment of the law. So let us not in timidity and treachery to ourselves deprive ourselves of understanding these words, as if we were afraid of that which the natural man, however much he shouts about his desire for knowledge and insight, fears—of getting to know too much; for to speak of love being the fulfillment of the law is an impossibility, without at the same time recognizing one's own guilt and making every man guilty.

Love is the fulfilling of the law, for the *law is, despite its many provisions, still somewhat indeterminate*, but love is its fulfillment; like a powerful speaker, who despite his exertions still cannot say everything, so is the law, but love is the fulfillment of the law.

It might seem strange to say that the law is indeterminate, for its strength lies in its provisions; it owns and rules over all the provisions. And, nevertheless, it is so, and therein also lies the weakness of the law. As a shadow is weak in comparison with the powerful reality, so is the law; but as there is always something vague about a shadow, so too is there vagueness in the outline of the law, however meticulously this is executed. Therefore in the Holy Scriptures the law is called, "a shadow of things to come," for the law is not a shadow which follows the reality of love; the law is assimilated in love, but the law is the shadow of things to come. When an artist outlines a plan, a sketch for his work, however exact the sketch is, it is always somewhat indefinite. Only when the work is finished, can one say: "Now there is not the least thing indefinite, not one line, not a single indefinite point." There is, therefore, only one sketch that is absolutely definite, that is the work itself, but that is saying that no sketch is or can be absolutely and unconditionally definite. So the law is the plan, love the fulfillment and the absolutely definite; in love the law is absolutely definite. There is only one power which can carry out the work for which the law furnishes the preliminary sketch, and that is love. Still the law and love, like the sketch and the finished work, are by one and the same artist,

from one and the same source; they are not at variance with one another any more than the finished work of art, which completely corresponds to the sketch, is at variance with that, because it is even more clearly defined than all the outlines of the sketch.

Therefore Paul says in another place, "The end of the commandment is love." But in what sense is this said? It is said in the same sense as it is said that love is the fulfillment of the law. In another sense, it is the sum of all the individual commandments, "Thou shalt not steal," and so on. But try to see if in this way you can find the sum however long you continue to count, and you will see that this is labor in vain, because the concept of the law is inexhaustible, endless, irresistible in its provisions; every provision produces an even more exacting provision, and then from that another still more exacting, and so on interminably.

Here love stands in the same relation to the law as reason does to faith. Reason counts and counts, reckons and reckons, but it never attains the certainty which faith possesses: so too with the law, it makes provisions and more provisions, but it never reaches the end, which is love. When the sum is mentioned, the very expression seems to suggest counting; but when a man has become tired of counting, and yet is even more anxious to find the sum, then he understands that this expression must have a deeper significance. And so, too, when the law has sicked all its provisions on a man and pursued him to exhaustion, because there are provisions everywhere, and yet every provision, even the most definite, has the uncertainty of interpretation that permits it to be made even more definite (for there is perpetually a vagueness in the provisions and an anxiety caused by their numbers, which never dies): then a man becomes trained to understand that there must be something different which constitutes the fulfillment of the law. But there is no more conflict between the law and love than there is between the sum and those numbers whose sum it is; as little as there is conflict between the vain attempt to find the sum and the successful finding of it, the happy decision that it has been found.

Man groans under the law. Wherever he looks he sees only its demand, never the limitation of its demand; like one who looks out over the sea and sees wave after wave, but never an end to them; wherever he turns he meets only the severity which can always become infinitely more severe, never the boundary where it passes over into mildness. The law is starving, as it were; by its aid one does not attain fullness, for it provides simply for taking away, for imposing demands, for exhausting to the uttermost, and the vagueness constantly inherent in its multitudinous provisions is the inexorable collecting of the claims. In each of its provisions the law demands something, and yet the number of provisions is unlimited. The law is, therefore, the exact opposite of

life, but the life is the fulfillment. The law resembles death. But I wonder if life and death do not really know one and the same thing; for just as accurately as life knows everything that makes for life, just so accurately does death know everything which makes for life. There is, therefore, in a certain sense no dispute between the law and love as regards knowledge, but love gives, the law takes, or, that we may express the relationship more properly, the law demands, love grants. There is not one provision of the law, not a single one, which love wishes to abolish; on the contrary, it is love which first gives them all fulfillment and definiteness; in love all the provisions of the law are far more clearly defined than in the law. There is no more conflict between them than there is between hunger and the blessing which satisfies that hunger.

Love is the fulfillment of the law; for love is no shirker of tasks, no indulgence, which demanding immunity or making excuses, coddling or being coddled, slips in between love and the fulfillment of the law, as if love were an idle emotion, too superior to express itself in action, an exigent incapacity, which neither can nor will give satisfaction. Only folly speaks thus about love, as if there were a conflict between the law and love, as there certainly is, but *in* the love there is no conflict between the law and the love which is the fulfillment of the law; as if there were an essential difference between the demands of the law and love, as there certainly is, but not *in* the love in which the fulfillment is completely one and the same with the demand. Only folly sows dissension between the law and love, believes it speaks wisely when it whispers between them, or even maligns one of them to the other.

Fulfillment of the law—still, what law are we speaking about? Our text is the *apostolic* word, we are speaking about *Christian love*, hence this discourse can only *refer to the law of God.* In this the world (insofar as this is different from what we have called "folly") and God, worldly wisdom and Christianity, agree that there is a law which love must fulfill in order to be love, but they disagree about what the law is, and this disagreement is an infinite difference. *Worldly wisdom* believes *that love is a relationship between man and man; Christianity teaches that love is a relationship between man—God—man, that is, that God is the middle term.* However beautiful a love-relationship has been between two or among many, however absolutely this love has been to them the source of all their happiness and all their blessedness in mutual sacrifice and renunciation, whether all men have praised this relationship—if God and the God-relationship have been neglected, then from the Christian viewpoint it has not been love, but a mutually enchanting illusion of love.

For to love God is in truth to love one's self; to help another man

to love God is to love the other man; to be helped by another man to love God is to be loved. Worldly wisdom certainly does not believe that the one who loves will arbitrarily determine what he wishes to understand by love. Love truly means devotion and sacrifice; therefore the world thinks that the object of love (be it the beloved, or a friend, or all those loved, or a social union, or one's contemporaries, which for the sake of brevity we shall hereafter call "the beloved") must decide whether self-sacrifice and devotion are displayed, and whether the self-sacrifice and devotion displayed are love. Hence it will depend on whether the men who do the judging know how to judge correctly. If the object of love, the judge, does not before God have a true conception in himself of what it means to love himself, that it means to love God, then neither will the beloved have any true conception of what it means to be loved by another man, that it means to be helped to love God; but if this is true, then, as a result, the beloved will take a false kind of devotion and self-sacrifice for true love, and true love for false love. The merely human judgment about love is not a true judgment, for to love God constitutes the true self-love. If God, on the other hand, is the middle term in judging love, then there follows a final and twofold judgment, which still only, although the only one at bottom decisive, begins where the human judgment has finished and has decided whether it is love or not.

The judgment is this: is it really love, from the divine standpoint, to show such a devotion as that demanded by the object of love? Next, is it, from the divine standpoint, really love to demand such devotion from the object of love? Every man is a bond servant unto God; therefore he dares not belong to anyone in love unless in the same love he belongs to God, or to own *anyone in* love unless this other and he himself *in* this love belong to God: a man dares not belong to another man in such a way that this other man is everything to him; a man dares not permit another to belong to him in such a way that he is everything to the other. If there were a love-relationship between two people or among many, so happy, so perfect, that a poet must rejoice over it, moreover, so blissful that one who was not a poet must become one from wonder and joy at this sight: that by no means ends the matter. For now Christianity enters and inquires about the God-relationship, whether each individual has first established a relationship with God, and whether the love-relationship maintains itself in God. If this is not the case, then will Christianity, which is still the protector of love, or just because it *is*, not hesitate to break up this relationship in the name of God, until the lovers are willing to understand it. And if only one party is willing to understand it, then Christianity, which still is the protector of love, will not hesitate to carry him into a horrible conflict,

such as no poet has dreamed of or ventured to describe. For just as little as the poet will have anything to do with the Christian teaching of *loving one's enemy*, just as little, and even less if possible, can he accept the Christian teaching of *hating the beloved* from love and in love. Still Christianity does not hesitate in the name of God, to strain the relationship so intensively. Christianity not only does this in order, as it were, to collect the outstanding debts due to God (since God is indeed the master and owner of bound men), but He does it out of love for the lovers; for to love God is to love one's own self; to love another man like God is to deceive one's self; and to allow another man to love one like God, is to deceive that other man. To such an extreme madness, humanly speaking, can Christianity drive its demand, if love is to be the fulfillment of the law. Therefore it teaches that the Christian must, if required, be able to hate father and mother and sister and the beloved—I wonder if it really means that he should hate them! Oh, may such an abomination be far from Christianity! But certainly in that sense, love, the divinely understood, steadfast and sincere love, may be looked upon as hate by the beloved, the neighbor, the contemporaries, because these will not understand what it means to love themselves, that it means to love God, and that to be loved means to be helped by another man to love God, whether this is actually achieved or not by the lover submitting to being hated. Lo, worldly wisdom has a long list of diversified expressions for sacrifice and devotion; I wonder if among these, this is also found: hating the beloved from love; hating the beloved and insofar himself from love; hating the contemporary and insofar his own life from love. Lo, worldly wisdom knows many and highly diversified cases of unhappy love; I wonder if among all these you find the suffering that might seem to hate the beloved, that might have hate as the last and sole expression of its love, or that suffering which for a reward of its love must be hated by the beloved, because there is the infinite difference of the Christian truth between that which the one party understands by love, and that which the other understands by it.

Whatever the world before the time of Christianity had seen of unhappy love, whatever it had seen of the collision of love with appalling events, whatever it had seen of its collision with what, within the same fundamental conceptions of what love is, is the converse of love, whatever it had seen of its collision with partially divergent ideas within the common fundamental idea: before the time of Christianity the world had never seen that in loving, there was a collision possible between two conceptions between which there is an eternal difference—between the divine conception and the merely human conception. But if there is such a collision, then it is, divinely understood, precisely love to cling to the true, the eternal conception, to love by virtue of it, whereas that

one, or those, who were loved, if they had only the human conception of love, must regard it as hate. If we may be permitted to speak quite humanly about the highest, we are unfortunately easily tempted to imagine in our so-called Christendom, that one believes that which one does not even have an impression of, at least not noticeably so; if we may be permitted to speak quite humanly about the highest, yet never forgetting that the one about whom we speak is separated by an eternal distance from every other man: the life of Christ is really the only unhappy love. He was, divinely understood, love. He loved by virtue of the divine understanding of what love is; He loved the entire race; He dared not—on account of His love, give up this, His understanding, for that would precisely be to deceive the race. Therefore His whole life was a terrible collision with the purely human understanding of what love is. It was the ungodly world which crucified Him; but even His disciples did not understand Him, and constantly sought to win Him to their conception of what love was, so that even to Peter He was obliged to say, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Unfathomable suffering in the terrible collision: that the most sincere, the most faithful disciple, when he, not only meaning well—oh, but burning with love—wishes to counsel Him for the best, wishes only to express how greatly he loves the Master—that this disciple, then, because he had a false conception of love, spoke in such a way that the Master must say to him: "You do not know it, but to me your words are as if it were Satan himself who spoke!" Thus Christianity came into the world, and with Christianity came the divine explanation of what love is.

Oh, we often complain about misunderstanding, especially when it is most bitterly mixed with love; when in each one of its expressions we know that the love is unhappy, that we are certainly loved but not understood; that everything is so bitter because it is done by love through a misunderstanding: but to be misunderstood as no other man was ever misunderstood by another man, to be thus misunderstood as Christ was—and then to be love as Christ was! We pretend that it was only the ungodly who were offended at Christ. What a misunderstanding! No, the best and most kindly man, humanly speaking, who has ever lived, must be offended at Him, must misunderstand Him; for what love is, divinely understood, this the best of men could learn only from Him. The love of Christ, humanly understood, was not self-sacrificing—anything but that; He did not make Himself unhappy, in order, humanly understood, to make His disciples happy. No, He made Himself and His disciples, humanly speaking, as unhappy as possible. And He who had had it in His power to establish the kingdom of Israel and make everything so pleasant for Himself and His followers, as every contemporary could see clearly enough!

Consequently He could have done it, consequently He would not do it, consequently the fault must have lain in Him, in His heart, that He would not sacrifice His ideas and His conceptions, but cruelly preferred to sacrifice Himself and His followers, that is, to forfeit His own life and the lives of those He loved! He did not establish any kingdom on earth, or sacrifice Himself so that the apostles might inherit the established kingdom. No, humanly speaking, it was indeed madness: He sacrifices Himself—in order to make the beloved equally unhappy with Himself! Was this really love: to gather some poor, simple-minded men about Him, to win their devotion and love, as no other had ever won it, to pretend for a moment to look out for them, as now the prospect of the fulfillment of their proudest dream is revealed to them—in order suddenly to reconsider and change the plans; in order without being moved by their prayers, without paying the least attention to them, to plunge them down from this seductive height into the abyss of all dangers; in order, without resistance, to give His enemies power; in order, under mockery and insult while the world rejoiced, to be nailed to the Cross as a criminal: was this really love?

Was it really love: to be thus separated from the disciples, to leave them forsaken in a world which hated them because of Him, to drive them out as wandering sheep among ravening wolves, whose blood-thirstiness He had Himself aroused against them: was this really love! What does this Man want, what does He want of these honest, simple-hearted even if simple-minded men whom He so cruelly deceives? Why does He call His relation to them love? Why does He continue to call it love? Why does He die without confessing that He deceived them, so that He therefore dies asserting that it was, nevertheless, love—alas, while the disciples with bruised hearts, but with touching loyalty, do not venture to have any opinion of their own about His conduct, presumably because He had overborne them? Meanwhile every other man can easily see that, whatever He was to the rest of the world, perhaps excusable as a fanatic, in relation to His disciples He acted like a deceiver! And yet He was love, and He exalted love above everything, and wished to make men happy, and how? Through their relationship to God—for He was love. Yes, He was love, and He knew in Himself and in God, that it was the sacrifice of reconciliation that He brought, that He truly loved His disciples, loved the entire race of men, or at least everyone who would permit himself to be saved!

The fundamental error in the merely human apprehension of love is, that love is deprived of its relation to God, and thereby of its relation to the law to which it refers when it says, "Love is the fulfillment of the law." By a strange misunderstanding one is perhaps inclined to believe that love for a neighbor must not be without a relationship to

God, but only earthly love and friendship. As if Christianity were something halved, as if it could not penetrate every relationship, as if the teaching about love for the neighbor did not exactly count on this, and therefore transformed earthly love and friendship; while many, through a strange misunderstanding, perhaps believe that they need God's help to love their neighbor—the less lovable object, but as to earthly love and friendship, they believe that, on the contrary, they can best help themselves—alas! as if God's intervention here would even be disturbing and inconvenient!

But no love and no expression of love may, in the merely human and worldly sense, be deprived of a relationship to God. Love is a passionate emotion, but in this emotion, even before he enters into a relation with the object of his love, the man must first enter into a relationship with God, and thereby realize the claim that love is the fulfillment of the law. Love is a relation to another man or to other men, but it is by no means and dares by no means be a matrimonial, a friendly, a merely human agreement, however steadfast and tender the connection between man and man. Everyone individually before he in love enters into a relation with the beloved, with the friend, the loved ones, the contemporaries, has first to enter into a relation with God and with God's demands. As soon as one leaves out the God-relationship the questions at issue become merely human determinations of what they wish to understand by loving; what they will require of one another; and their mutual judgment because of this becomes the highest judgment. Not only the one who listens absolutely to the call of God will not belong to a woman, in order not to be delayed through wishing to please her; but also the one who in love belongs to a woman, will first and foremost belong to God; he will not seek first to please his wife, but will first endeavor to make his love pleasing unto God. Hence it is not the wife who will teach her husband how he ought to love her, or the husband the wife, or the friend the friend, or the contemporary the contemporary, but it is God who will teach every individual how he ought to love, even if his love still only lays hold on the law referred to when the apostle says, "Love is the fulfillment of the law." This makes it quite natural that the one who has only a worldly, or a merely human conception about what love is, must come to regard that as self-love and unkindness which, understood in the Christian sense, is precisely love. When, on the other hand, the God-relationship determines what love is between man and man, then love is kept from pausing in any self-deception or illusion, while certainly the demand for self-abnegation and sacrifice is again made more infinite. The love which does not lead to God, the love which does not have this as its sole goal, to lead the lovers to love God, stops at the purely human judgment as to what love and what

love's sacrifice and submission are; it stops and thereby escapes the possibility of the last and most terrifying horror of the collision: that in the love relationship there are infinite differences in the idea of what love is.

Merely humanly understood this collision can never enter, for merely humanly understood, the fundamental conception of what love is must essentially be a common conception. Only when understood in the Christian way is the collision possible, since it is the collision between the Christian and the purely human understanding. Nevertheless, Christianity knows how to steer through this difficulty, and no other doctrine has ever taught how to persevere so long in love as has Christianity. Unchanged and immovable, it teaches, precisely for the sake of the beloved, how to hold fast to the true conception of what love is, and then be willing to find the reward for its love in being hated by the beloved—for there is indeed the difference of infinity, an eternal difference in language, between what one party understands by love, and what the other party understands by it. To yield to the conception of the beloved as to what love is, that is humanly regarded as loving, and if one does it, then one is loved. But to hold out against the beloved's purely human conception of what love is by denying the wish, and insofar, also against what the lovers, from the human standpoint, must themselves wish, in order to hold fast the God-idea: that is the collision. It can never occur to the purely human apprehension of what love is, that a man through being loved as intensely as possible by another man, might be an obstacle in the way of the other man. And yet from the Christian standpoint this is exactly possible, for to be loved in this way may interfere with the God-relationship of the lovers. But what is there then to do?

That the beloved should wish to caution against this will certainly not help much, for that would only make him even more lovable—and consequently the lovers would be even more deceived. Christianity knows how to remove the collision without breaking off the love; there is required only the sacrifice (that is certainly in many cases the hardest thing possible, and always very hard): of being willing to find the reward for his love in being hated. Wherever a man is so loved, so admired by others, that he is in the way of becoming dangerous to their God-relationship, there is a collision; but where there is a collision there is also demanded the sacrifice which the merely human conception of what love is does not suspect. For the Christian conception is: truly to love one's self is to love God; truly to love another man is by every sacrifice (even to one's self being hated), to help the other man to love God or in loving God.

This is certainly very easy to understand; in the world, on the con-

trary, it certainly meets with great difficulties, because a contrary view of what love is, a worldly, a merely human, but withal a both effectively ingenious and poetical view, either explains that all this about the God-relationship is really a delusion, a retardation, or else, in speaking about love, it keeps silent about the God-relationship. As in these times there is an effort made in so many directions to free men from all restraint, even the beneficial restraint, so there is an effort to free the emotional relation between man and man from the bonds which bind him to God, and which bind him in everything, in every expression of life. One wishes in relation to love, to teach men something entirely new, something for which the now outmoded Holy Scriptures already have the significant expression—one wishes to teach men the liberty which "is without God in the world." The abominable age of serfdom is past, so one thinks to go farther by the aid of the abomination: to abolish man's bondage with relation to God, to whom every man—not by birth, but by his creation from nothing—belongs as a serf, and thus as no serf has ever belonged to an earthly master, who does still admit that the thoughts and emotions of his serfs are free: but he belongs to God in every thought, the most hidden, in every feeling, the most secret, in every movement, the most inward. Still, one finds this serfdom to be a troublesome adjunct, and therefore more or less openly considers setting God aside and establishing man—in the rights of man? No, that is not needed, God has already done that—hence in the rights of God; consequently the place remains vacant, if God is dismissed. Lo, as a reward for such presumption, one will in this way tend more and more to transform the whole of existence into doubt or turmoil.

After all, what is the law? What does the law require of a man? That must be decided by men. Which men? Here the doubt begins. Since one man does not essentially stand higher than the other, then the condition is entirely left to me as to whom I wish to agree with in determining what the highest is, insofar as I might not by myself be able, if possible even more arbitrarily, to hit upon a new provision, and as promoter gain support for it. It is likewise left to my decision to select one requirement of the law today, another tomorrow. Or shall the determination of what the law requires perhaps be an agreement between men, a common decision of all men, to which agreement the individual must then subject himself? Excellent! If it were otherwise possible to select a place and fix the moment for this assembling of all men (all living, all?—but how about the dead?), and if that were possible, which is manifestly impossible, possible that they would all agree on one thing! Or is perhaps an agreement of a majority, a certain number of votes sufficient for a decision? How great a number is needed then? And, above all, if the purely human determinations of what the law re-

quires is the requirement of the law (yet not the individual man's, for thereby we fall into the purely arbitrary, as was shown), how can the individual come to begin to act; or if it is not left to chance, where does the individual happen to begin, instead of everyone starting at the beginning? Before the individual can begin to act, he must first learn from "the others" what the law requires; but each one of the others will again as individuals have to learn from "the others." In this way, all human life transforms itself into one huge excuse—can this possibly be what we call the great, matchless, common undertaking, the great achievement of the race? The category of "the others" becomes fantastic, and the fantastically aspiring determination of what the law requires a false alarm.

And if now this inhumanly extensive effort toward a common agreement among all men were not finished in a single evening, but dragged along from generation to generation, then as a consequence it would be quite accidental as to where the individual happened to begin; it would depend, so to speak, on where he came into the game. Some would begin at the beginning, but would die before they reached the halfway mark; others would begin midway, but die without seeing the end, which no one would ever really see, for that would only come when the whole thing was past and world history ended; only then would one completely learn what the requirement of the law was. What a pity that human life should not be forced to begin until just as it is over, and in consequence have to be carried on by all men without complete knowledge of what the law required!

When of seven men who are all suspected of having committed a crime which could not have been committed by any one else, the seven each say: "It wasn't me, it was the others," then we understand that "the others" refers to the other six, and so on. But now when all seven, each severally, have said, "It was the others," what then? Is there not a phantasm conjured up which has doubled the actual seven, and which would have us believe that there were many more, although we know that there were only seven? So, too, when the whole race, each individual severally, hits upon the idea of saying "the others," then a phantasm is conjured up, as if the race had once existed before the time which marks its actual existence; but here it becomes so difficult to prove the falsity, the dazzling appearance of profundity, because the race is innumerable. Nevertheless, the situation is entirely the same as in what we might be tempted to call a fairy story about the seven and the seven others. For this is exactly the situation that arises when the purely human determination of what the law's requirement is, constitutes the law's requirement: one helps one's self up by using that romantically fantastic "the others," and down below they assist each other by forming a little

union. For certainly if there is to be a second existence of the human race, but not a fantastic one, its existence the second time must be its existence in God, or rather this is its first existence, wherein each individual learns from God the requirement of the law. The actual existence is the second existence.

But what then does that confused condition described resemble? I wonder if it is not like a mutiny. Or should we hesitate to call it by that name if at a given moment it were the whole race who became guilty of this, and we then, it is well to note, add that it is a mutiny against God? Or is the moral so subordinated to the accidental that when a great number do wrong, or we all do wrong, then this wrong becomes the right? This explanation would again be merely a repetition of the mutinous thought, or of its thoughtlessness, for if it is still, in the final analysis, men instead of God who determine what the law's requirement is, he who forgets this is not only guilty of rebellion against God on his own account, but he also assists others in becoming guilty, so the mutiny gets out of hand. For who could halt such a mutiny if it started? Should we perhaps, only in a new pattern, repeat the error of the mutiny, and everyone in particular say, "I cannot stop it, 'the others' must"? I wonder if every individual is not pledged to God to halt the mutiny, naturally not by shouting and imaginary self-importance, not by ruling and wishing to force others to obey God, but through his own unconditional obedience, his own unconditional laying hold on the God-relationship and the God-requirement, and thereby expressing for himself personally that God exists and is the only ruler, he, on the contrary, the unconditionally obedient.

Only then is there sense and meaning and truth and reality in existence, when all of us, each one personally, if I may say so, accept our orders at one place, and then, each one personally, unconditionally obey this same order. Since it is one and the same order, then to that extent one man might be able to learn it from another—if it was certain, or at least reasonably certain, that this other man would communicate it rightly. However, there would still be a confusion everywhere, as it is in conflict with God's order, for God wishes, for the sake of certainty and equality and responsibility, that every individual should learn the law's requirement from Him. When this is so, then there is stability in existence, because the stability has God in it; there is no turbulence in it, for each individual does not begin with "the others," and consequently not with excuses and evasions, but he begins with the God-relationship, and hence he stands firmly, and thereby he also checks, as far as he can reach, the capriciousness which is the beginning of mutiny.

So, too, in relation to the law of love—when there is sense and truth and stability in existence, when we all, each one personally, learn from

God what the requirement is to which we must conform, and when, for the rest, we all, each one personally, defend ourselves against the human confusion (it goes without saying that if we all did this, there would then be no confusion), aye, if necessary, defend ourselves against the beloved, against the friend, against our nearest, who are, nevertheless, especially the objects of our love, insofar as these in some way wish to teach us a different explanation, or help us on a bypath; on the other hand, indebted to them if they wish to help us in the right direction. Let us not forget this, let us not deceive or be deceived by vague, misty conceptions of what love is, but let us heed God's explanation, indifferent as to whether the beloved, the friend, or the loved ones believe or do not believe—yet no, not indifferent, on the contrary, inwardly concerned if they disagree with us, but still calmly and unchanged continuing to love them.

There is really a conflict between what the world and what God understand by love. It is easy enough to bring about an apparent agreement (as is already apparent in the use of one and the same word, "love"); on the other hand it is more difficult really to detect the disagreement; but this difficulty is inevitable if we are to know the truth. There is a saying current in the world: "Selfishness is the wisest policy." Certainly this saying does not give one the most favorable opinion of the world; for that is scarcely a good world in which selfishness is the wisest policy or that which brings the greatest advantage. But now, even if the world regarded selfishness as the wisest policy, it by no means follows that it might not in turn regard love as the nobler quality. It does this too, only the world does not understand what love is. Again, it is easy enough to bring about a surface agreement between God and the world's interpretation of love; it is even apparent in the use of the familiar expression that "love is noble." Still, misunderstanding hides in this. What good does it do to commend love as noble, as Christianity also does, if the world understands by love something different, and hence also understands something different by the word "noble"! No, if the world will be explicit, it must say: "Not only is selfishness the wisest policy, but if you wish to be loved by the world, if you wish it to praise your love and you as noble, then you must, in the Christian sense, be selfish, for that which the world calls love is selfishness." The distinction which the world makes is, namely, this: If one wishes to be alone in being selfish, which, however, very rarely happens, then the world calls it selfishness; but if in his selfishness he unites with some other selfish people, especially with many other selfish people, then the world calls it love. The world can never get any further in determining what love is, because it has neither God nor the neighbor as the middle term. What the world honors and loves under the name

of love, is a union in selfishness. The union also demands sacrifice and devotion from the one whom it will call affectionate; it demands that he shall sacrifice a part of his own self-love in order to unite in the united selfishness; and it demands that he shall sacrifice the God-relationship so that in worldliness he may enter into the union which excludes God, or at most accepts Him for the sake of appearances. On the contrary, God understands by love sacrificial love; in the divine sense, sacrificing love, which sacrifices everything in order to secure God a place, even if the heavy sacrifice became even heavier because no one understood it, which, however, in another sense, is proper for true sacrifice; for that sacrifice, which is understood by men, truly has its reward in their approbation, and insofar is not the true sacrifice which must unconditionally be without reward. Therefore we dare not in our understanding of the apostolic word, that love is the fulfillment of the law, assent to the superficial saying that if a man really has love, then he will also be loved by men. He will far more probably be accused of selfishness, just because he will not love men in the same sense in which they selfishly love themselves. The facts are these: the highest degree of self-love, the world also calls selfishness; the self-love of the union, the world calls love; a noble, sacrificial, magnanimous, human love, which yet is not the Christian love, is ridiculed by the world as foolishness; but the Christian love is hated and abominated and persecuted by the world. And so let us not again, through a doubtful compromise, conceal irregularities by saying: "That is the way of the world, but it is otherwise with the Christian." For this is quite true, but if every baptized individual is a Christian, and a baptized Christendom sanctifies the Christian, then the "world" simply does not exist in a Christian land, which in such a case is proved by the help of the lists of the sexton and the superintendent of police.

No, there is really a conflict between what God understands by love and the world's understanding of it. Oh, but if it is inspiring to fight for home and fatherland, then it is also inspiring to strive for God, which he does who before God and in His sight, holds fast to the God-relationship, and its definition of what love is! It is true God does not need any man, any more than He needs the whole race, or everything which exists at the moment, which to Him is the nothing from which He created it; but he fights for God who fights the good fight, in order to express the fact that God exists and is the Lord, whose explanation must unconditionally be obeyed.

The God-relationship is the sign by which the love for men is recognized as genuine. As soon as the love-relationship does not lead me to God, and as soon as I in the love-relationship do not lead the other man to God, then is the love, even if it is the greatest happiness and delight

of affection, even if to the lovers it is the highest good of the earthly life, still not the true love. The world can never get this into its head, that God does not thus merely become the third party in every love-relation, but really becomes the sole object of affection, so it is not the husband who is the wife's beloved, but it is God; and it is the wife who is helped by her husband to love God, and conversely, and so on. The merely human interpretation of love can never get any further than reciprocity: the lover is the beloved, and the beloved is the lover. Christianity teaches that such a love has not yet found its right object—God. A love-relationship is threefold: the lover, the beloved, the love; but the love is God. And, therefore, to love another man is to help him to love God, and to be loved is to be helped to love God.

What the world says about love is confusing. When it is said to a youth who is going out into the world, "Love, then you will be loved," this is quite true—especially if the journey he entered upon were into the eternal, into the land of perfection. But the youth must go out into the world, and therefore it is deceitful to speak thus, without reminding him about laying hold on God in order to learn what love is, and in order to learn that the world, if it had not learned the same lesson from God (alas, for then it would have been the land of perfection the youth entered!), has a completely different conception. If Christ had not been love, and the love in Him the fulfillment of the law, I wonder if He would have been crucified! If He had abated His demand for Himself and had agreed with those who make love anything but the fulfillment of the law, divinely understood; if instead of being the world's Teacher and Saviour, He had in comformity with the world's conception, transformed His conception of what it means to love: I wonder if He then would not have been loved and praised by everyone, even idolized (oh, terrible madness!) by His followers. If the apostles had not held fast to the idea that love is the fulfillment of the law, and hence something different from the fulfillment of the human agreements and participation in the human society; if they had not held fast in this same sense to loving men without being willing to accommodate themselves to the world's conception of what it means to love: I wonder if they would have been persecuted! For what is it the world loves and calls love, what other than indecision and completely earthly union in worldliness, which from the standpoint of eternity, is precisely indecision?

I wonder if any man ever became more notorious for selfishness than the One who really held to the God-requirement, and, faithful to this, loved men, and therefore also continued to love them, although persecuted and misjudged. Is it not also natural that the world should be angry if there is One who is loved more dearly by such a man, One in love to whom such a love exists for men? When one's endeavor is exerted to gain earthly advantage, then one certainly complains unjustly about the world

if one complains about not finding friends; for at that price one can be loved enough, gain friends, have many or few with whom—one affectionately associates.

But when a man's endeavor is put forth unconditionally in a total sacrifice, in the sacrifice of everything, impoverished, despised, excluded from the synagogue, in order to unite with God in loving men: then you can, for that matter, advertise in the paper that you are looking for a friend—if only you add the conditions, and hence with special emphasis, "that it is not for the sake of advantage"; you will have trouble in finding anyone. We ourselves marvel that Christ chose such humble men for apostles, but, disregarding what was certainly intentional in the choice, the humbler the apostle was as man, the stronger the impression of that which the divine authority granted to him. I wonder if it is not almost more wonderful that Christ nevertheless got them, hence that He really succeeded in forming a union of eleven, whose purpose was to unite in their readiness to let themselves be scourged, persecuted, mocked, crucified, beheaded, and whose purpose too was not mutually to flatter one another, but, on the contrary, mutually to help one another in humility before God. I wonder if this would not sound like a terrible mockery of what the world understands by love, but I wonder if it might not besides act like a beneficial awakening, if in these times, when so many societies are being formed, someone were to advertise that he planned to establish such a union of love! For that there are a lot of people, if someone wishes to make all sacrifices, who would indolently like to take advantage of his sacrifices, that is something the world can understand; the kind of participation which is for one hundred per cent profit but less than half of that for the work, is common enough in the world. And it goes without saying that there is also true participation to be found here on earth, but where you find it, you will find it hated and persecuted by the world.

Try it. Imagine a man (and you need not even think of him as possessing the perfection which distinguished that glorious One who, repudiated by the race, became the honor of the race), imagine a man who was or became, or was and became, so unhappy that earthly goods and earthly advantage had lost their allurement for him; so unhappy that he, "weary of his groaning," as we read in the Holy Scriptures about the unhappy Sara—"so distressed she wished to hang herself" imagine that then, just in his darkest hour of need, it became quite clear to him that in spite of his unhappiness, which certainly would not be alleviated by gaining the goods of the whole world, since their possession by encouraging happy enjoyment would be to him a painful recollection of his wretchedness, and would really not be augmented by worldly adversity, which, like dark weather for the melancholy, would

harmonize with his mood; imagine that it became quite clear to him that the highest even still remained to him in wishing to love men, in wishing to serve the good, in wishing to serve the truth for the sake of truth alone, the only thing which could truly cheer his anxious heart and fill him with an eternal joy of life—imagine such a one in the world, and you will see it will go hard with him. He does not gain the love of the world, he will not be understood or loved by the world. In proportion as men belong a little more or less to the world, some will pity him, some smile at him, some will prefer to get rid of him because they would feel the sting, some will envy him and yet not envy him, some will feel attracted to him but also repelled by him; some will work against him, but yet have everything in readiness to honor him after his death. Some young women will feel themselves fascinated by him, but those only a little older will not completely understand him. But the world would simply and plainly prove his selfishness because he secured no earthly advantage either for himself or others, not for a single other man. The world is not better; the highest it recognizes and loves, when it aims highest, is: to love the good and men, but in such a way that one also secures an earthly advantage for one's self and some others. Anything more the world, even with the best of intentions—now this is of course only playing with words—cannot grasp; one step too far and you have lost the friendship and love of the world. Such is the world and its love. No scientist who tests with a hydrometer the specific gravity of a liquid, can more certainly vouch for how many degrees it registers, than I am willing to vouch for this appraisal of worldly love, which is not entirely evil, as it is sometimes passionately represented to be, or entirely sound, but to a certain degree both good and bad. But from the Christian standpoint this "to a certain degree" is evil.

Nevertheless, we do not say this in order to judge; let us not waste time on it. Reflection only seeks by the aid of thought and by the help of a little knowledge of human nature, to penetrate the illusion, or to understand that apostolic saying with respect to the daily life, where the illusion exactly belongs. Certainly no time is needed in order to be deceived; one can be deceived immediately and continue to be so for a long time; but it takes time to notice that one is deceived. It is certainly easier hastily to imagine what love is, and then satisfy one's self in the imagination; it is far easier hurriedly to get some kinds of men to associate themselves in selfishness, loved and honored by them to the last: there is after all nothing so easy and nothing so sociable as this going astray. But if this is your ultimate and highest ambition, to get life made easy and sociable, then never have anything to do with Christianity; flee from it, for it wishes exactly the opposite, wishes to make

life difficult for you, and to do it just by making you solitary before God. No earnest man therefore becomes tired of tracking down illusions; for inasfar as he is a thinker, he fears most of all being in error—however convenient the arrangement, however pleasant the company might be. And as a Christian, he fears most of all being lost without knowing it —however flattering, however brilliant the environment and the company are.

That such pretentiousness is not love seems so easy to perceive that one might believe that no one would think of supporting it. Still this is not always the case, and here is precisely an example of an illusion insofar as the merely human judgment might be decisive. If the pretentious man himself were to think of calling it love, then one would certainly raise a protest, since there was no illusion; the illusion arises only when others wish to become the object of this pretentiousness, regard it as love, praise it as love, and the pretentious man as kind. Without pretending to be any great judge of human nature, it is not difficult to point out life-relationships where a man can be so placed that there are those who, just to gain his good will, simply praise his love if in the name of love he wishes to demand everything from them. There are indeed men who really know nothing about love other than that it is petting. Such men would like to have the one they love and are fond of, be pretentious. There are men who have inhumanly forgotten that every man ought to develop himself through that divine resemblance common to all men, and that therefore, whether a human being is man or woman, poorly endowed or richly endowed, lord or bond servant, beggar or rich man, the relation between man and man should never and dare never be such that the one adores and the other is adored. This is so easy to perceive that one perhaps thinks that this abomination can originate only from the misuse of superiority, hence in the supercilious. Alas, it can also arise in the impotent, in the one who himself desires it in order thus to have some significance for the superior.

Take away the equality of eternity and its divine satisfaction, that is, assume that it is forgotten: then the weak woman in her relation to the supercilious man, the man poorly endowed who is yet vain of his relation to the mighty man, the poor man who has but a worldly concern in his relation to the "big man," the very subservient and yet worldly-minded man in his relation to his master—none of them know any other way to express this relationship except by abjectly prostrating themselves. And since they still, because they *wish* to know nothing higher, know nothing higher, therefore they themselves desire this abomination, desire it passionately. Their desire is to exist for the powerful; as power cannot be secularized, so subserviency becomes the thing desired. Is it perhaps not apparent that a girl would prefer ruthlessly to throw herself

away and worship the idolized (desiring only one thing from him, that he would ruthlessly demand everything from her, and under these circumstances she would highly praise his love), rather than to understand that before God all these human differences are a joke, are nonsense, often leading to perdition? And yet the girl would call it selfishness for the adored to try to impart this knowledge to her. Have we not seen that the man weak through forgetting God, the debased man, had but one wish, that he might cast himself in the dust before his lord—in order to exist for him; only one desire, that the lord will tread upon him so that he may joyfully praise the gracious love and goodness of his lord! Have we not seen that the vainglorious man, who had quite forgotten God, desired only some relation to the distinguished man and readily called the most debased actions a sign of his love! And if the distinguished man does not desire this, if he wishes to prevent this by helping that man to the blessed equality before God, this is called selfishness. Oh, if the eternal is taken away from a man, or is in him as if it were not present, the eternal which can at once cool the unsound passions in the relation between man and man, but which can also enkindle when the temporal existence would chill; if the eternal is taken away from a man, then there is no assurance that it will not occur to him to call the most abominable practices by the name of love, and even passionately desire to be the object of these abominable practices. One can ruthlessly wish to make himself indispensable through his power, but he can also do this through his weakness, and therefore, cringing and begging, call another man's superciliousness love.

But the demand of eternity will not excuse a man from fulfilling the law of God, even if the whole world were to excuse him, even if the whole world were to love his pretentiousness but misunderstand his love, because perhaps only through despair can the despairing learn to hold themselves to God, instead of through their importunities injuring their own souls. The demand of eternity will prevent love from lingering in any self-deception, and from being satisfied with any illusion; and it will be no excuse to say that the men themselves wished it, that they themselves called it love, and believed that being loved consisted in being the object of such pretentiousness. It is God who has implanted love in man, and it is God who must decide what in every case is love.

But then when your friend, your beloved, your loved ones, your contemporaries, notice that you wish to learn from God what it means to love, instead of learning it from them, then they will perhaps say to you: "Spare yourself; give up this overstraining; why will you make your life so hard? Lessen your demands; then we shall live a beautiful, a rich, a significant life in friendship and joy." And if you give way

to the suggestions of that false friendship, then you will be loved, be praised for your love. But if you will not do it, if you will not in loving be a traitor to God or to yourself or to the others, then you may find yourself being called selfish. For your conviction that to love yourself is in truth to love God, that loving another man is helping him to love God, this, your conviction, your friend will perhaps not trouble about. He notices indeed that your life, if it truly conforms to the God-demand, contains, even if you say nothing, a reminder, a demand upon him—this he will have nothing to do with. Your reward is, therefore, the sacrifice of your friendship and your reputation for being a friend.

In the world the worldly has, so much the worse, the upper hand to the degree that when one talks about false friendship, one immediately thinks of some deception with respect to worldly advantages, or a faithlessness regarding earthly goods. And this was certainly not your friend's intention or meaning. He only wished to defraud you of the God-relationship, and that you as his friend would be helpful to him in deceiving himself: then in the deception he would loyally unite with you for life and death. We speak about the duplicity of the world, and in so doing at once suggest that it deceives one with respect to earthly goods, disappoints one's great expectations, mocks one's bold plans. But, if in this respect it honestly fulfills its obligations almost more abundantly than it had promised, that this is just the time when it can deceive most dangerously, that this its most dangerous duplicity, one more rarely thinks about: that the world through its—sincere friendship (for false friendship would consist in its defrauding one of the temporal things), wishes to teach one to forget God. They talk about making a covenant with evil, and if one asks what advantage is offered as compensation, then people will mention power, glory, honor, the satisfaction of desires and so on. But that one can by such a covenant also win the love of men, be praised for one's love, that is something they forget to speak about and to think about. Nevertheless, this is the case —for the converse is and would indeed be the case, that they who in love to God loved men, would be hated by the world. As the world by offering power and might has wished to tempt a man to forget God, and then has treated the same man as refuse because he endured its temptation: so has the world also temptingly offered a man its friendship, and then hated him because he would not be its friend. The eternal, the God-demand for love, the world will not readily hear anything about, even more reluctantly will it see it expressed in life. But I wonder if the world therefore says about itself that it is selfish. By no means. And then what does the world do? The world says about the one who insists on maintaining his relation to God, that he is selfish. The way out is old: sacrifice one, if all the others can profit thereby.

In this God and the world agree, that love is the fulfilling of the law; the difference is that the world understands by law something it hit on itself; and he who agrees to this and observes it faithfully, he is kind. How many a man has not a maiden's love, from the divine standpoint, destroyed, just because he, defrauded of his God-relationship, remained too true to her, while she in turn was unlimited in her eulogies over his love! How many a man has not been corrupted by family and friends, while yet his corruption did not appear to be so, for now he was loved and praised for his love—by his family and friends? How many a man has not an age corrupted, the age which for compensation adored his affectionate disposition because it made him forget the God-relationship, and transformed it into something one can vociferously make a show of, rejoice over and effeminately admire without being consciously reminded of anything higher? For, in order to raise another and truly earnest question, and also in order not even to point at the highest pattern but to be content with a humbler one, which yet in the so-called Christendom unfortunately is adequate enough: why, I wonder, did that simple wise man of antiquity when, accused before the court of frivolity by the worldly and selfish, he was condemned to death, defend his life; why, I wonder, did he compare himself to a "gadfly" at the same time he called himself a divine gift; and why, I wonder, did he love the young so much? Was not the first because, as a pagan could, he had loved men in some higher sense, hence because he had really awakened, and had not in any way allowed himself to be seduced by the temporal existence, or by anything human; not by a dull or fiery union in love, in friendship, in agreement with others or with an age, but he had preferred to be the selfish, the teasingly annoying man whom no one loved! Was not the latter because he perceived that the young still had the susceptibility to the divine which is so easily lost with the years in busyness, in love and friendship, in submission to a merely human judgment and to the demands of the times? Hence, because through his concept of the eternal and through "something divine," he had prevented his love for men from halting in self-deception and illusion; hence, because through keeping himself close to the demand, he had made himself a demand on men.

If, therefore, in some way, even if in human frailty, you aspire to fulfill the apostolic saying that "Love is the fulfillment of the law," then give heed to men! Does this mean that you would be loved by them? Oh, how absurd! How then could your love become the fulfillment of the law? But give heed that it does not become more important to you that you should be esteemed for loving them than that you do love them! Take care that being loved is not more important to you than the fact of loving each other! Take care that you do not deprive your-

self of the highest, because you cannot bear to be called selfish! Do not appeal to men's opinions of you in order to prove your love; for the opinion of men has validity only insofar as it harmonizes with God's demand; otherwise men are only your accomplices! Learn also, and never forget the lesson, this sad truth of the earthly life, that no love between man and man ever can or will be perfectly happy, will ever dare to be perfectly confident! For, divinely understood, even the happiest love between man and man has still one danger which the merely human understanding of love does not consider, the danger that the earthly love might become too intense, so that the God-relationship would be interfered with; the danger that the God-relationship, when humanly speaking there is nothing but peace and no danger even in sight, may exact even this, the happiest love, as a sacrifice. And from this possibility of danger it follows that even in the happiest love-relationship, you must always anxiously watch, although this concern is not the fear that you might grow tired of the beloved or the beloved of you, but lest you should both forget God, or that the beloved might do so, or you yourself. And from the possibility of this danger it follows, recalling the introduction to these reflections, how difficult it may be in the Christian sense, to promise love, when the fact of keeping the promise may signify that you will come to be hated by the beloved. Only God, who, as we have explained, is also the only true object of love, is always happy, always blessed in loving; you must not watch in concern, but watch only in adoration.

Love is the fulfillment of the law. But the law consists of an inexhaustible multitude of provisions. How then could we be prepared to speak about them? So let us then assemble the multitude of decisions. The *demand of the law* must therefore be twofold, *partly a demand for inwardness, and partly a demand for continuity.*

What then is the required inwardness? The merely human understanding of love also requires inwardness, devotion, sacrifice, but it defines these only humanly. The devotion of inwardness is: that every sacrifice should satisfy the conception of the beloved (the object of love) as to what love is, or, on its own responsibility, venture to decide what love is. But divinely understood, inwardness believes that loving one's self is loving God, and that truly loving another man is being helpful to him for or in loving God. Hence inwardness is not here determined merely by the love-relationship, but by the God-relationship. The inwardness demanded is then the inwardness of self-abnegation, which is more closely defined, not according to the understanding of the beloved (the object of affection) about love, but with regard to helping the be-

loved to love God. It follows as a matter of course that the love-relationship may, as such, be the sacrifice which is demanded.

The inwardness of love must be sacrificial, and consequently must not demand any reward. The purely human understanding of love teaches also that love demands no reward—except that it wishes to be loved, as if that which constitutes the entire relationship, yet not within the category of the relation between man and man, were no reward. But the inwardness of Christian love is willing, as the reward of its love, to be hated by the beloved (the object of affection). This proves that this inwardness is a pure God-relationship; it has no reward, not even the reward of being loved: thus it belongs absolutely to God, or absolutely to man in God. The self-abnegation, the self-control, the self-sacrifice, which are still but media of exchange within the temporal, within the human horizon, are not truly Christian; they are as a jest in comparison with the Christian earnestness; they are like the first start toward a Christian decision. One will sacrifice this or that or everything, but one still hopes that this sacrifice will be understood and have sense and meaning for men, who then must recognize and rejoice at one's sacrifices. One is willing to forsake everything, but still one does not think that along with that his sacrifice should be forgotten in the conversation and understanding of men.

The promptings of the sacrifice then become apparent; it pretends to abandon the world, but it still remains within the world. We by no means wish to disparage this. Oh, even this merely human sacrifice is perhaps met with seldom enough. But from the Christian standpoint, we must say that it remains standing at the halfway mark. It ascends to a high place, for, humanly speaking, the sacrifice stands high; it throws everything away in order to ascend to this exalted place, whose elevation admiration discovers, while the sacrifice perceives that it is seen. But to stand upon this exalted place (for truly, sacrifice is elevation) accused, despised, hated, ridiculed almost worse than the most debased among the base; hence superhumanly taxed in attaining the lofty place, to stand there in such a way that it seems to everyone as if one stood at the lowest level of the contemptible: from the Christian standpoint this is sacrifice, and from the human point of view it is also madness. Only One sees the true connection, and He does not admire; for God in heaven does not admire any man.

On the contrary, while true sacrifice has but one single place of resort: God, so he is as if once more forsaken by God, for he understands that before God he is simply without merit. But humanly he also understands that had he but sacrificed a half of what he did sacrifice, then men would have understood him, loved and admired him, and yet, in a certain sense, that before God this partial sacrifice would have the

same significance as the true sacrifice, for before God no sacrifice, not one, has merit. This is sacrifice according to the Christian standpoint, and also, humanly understood, it is madness. This is loving from the Christian standpoint; if it is true that loving is the highest happiness, this is indeed the hardest suffering—if then the holding of one's self to God were not the highest bliss!

The other requirement of the law is for the continuation of love for the duration of time. The merely human conception of love also demands this; still from the Christian standpoint it is a different demand, since the inwardness demanded is different. The demand for the continuation in time means that the same inwardness of love shall be preserved throughout the duration of time, which insofar is in a certain sense a new expression for inwardness. As soon as you think that you have done enough in your love, or have loved long enough, and now may ask something from the other, then through that you discover that your love is prepared to become a demand, as if, however devoted and sacrificing your love is, there were still a limit where it must at bottom appear to be a demand—but love is the fulfillment of the law. For it is not some great moment of self-abnegation that we are speaking about; the law demands the same inwardness for the duration of time. The duration of time! But is not this, as it were, to do violence to one's soul, and a self-contradiction in the demand, at the same time to demand continuation in such different directions, in the direction of length and in the direction of depth? Lo, the arrow flies swiftly forward through the air, but if at the same time it ought to bore itself down into the earth and still continue to fly with the speed of an arrow: ah, what a demand! Lo, in the great moment of enthusiasm, then the eternal tarries, but then when time begins its restless activity, when it continues to pass —then not to go enthusiastically with time, but to go hurriedly with the haste of time, and yet slowly with the lingering of eternity! To lie on one's deathbed (and when a man in self-renunciation has been obliged to make the heaviest sacrifice: and for a reward of his love is hated by its object, then he is like the one who lies at the point of death), and then to have a future, a long life before one, although everything is past, hence, at once and at any moment, lying on his deathbed to have to stand erect and go forward: what a demand! To lie down is exactly the opposite of walking upright, but to lie upon one's deathbed is certainly the most decisive expression for lying down, and hence the farthest possible removed from standing erect. Have you ever seen a weary traveler bearing a heavy burden, fighting at every step in order not to sink to earth? He holds himself erect only with the greatest difficulty, he struggles in order not to sink down. But to have sunk down, to lie down, to lie upon his deathbed, and then to hasten confidently forward with the

stride of the erect: wonderful! And the demand may require this, and also require its continuance for the duration of time.

Alas! in the world of the spirit there is something fraudulent, for which there is nothing analogous found in the external world. We say for instance that a child must learn to spell before it can learn to read. Fortunately or unfortunately, this is undoubtedly a necessity. It has never happened to any child that through a phenomenon, an illusion, it had occasion to imagine that it could already read long before it could spell. But in the spiritual relation, how seductive! For here does not everything begin with the great moment of the resolve, of the purpose, of the promise—where one reads as fluently as the most accomplished reader, the one best trained in reading by book? And so, if the next comes first, what is the use of the very petty things, the plainly commonplace things, which simply do not make any strong impression, or wish to help one by the daring context? Alas! on the contrary, it is like the spelling which tears the words apart into letters, so that there are long, long hours when one cannot arrive at the meaning, and vainly waits to see the connection. To strive with one's self in self-abnegation, especially if one must conquer, is regarded as the most difficult struggle; and to strive with time, if one would completely conquer, is regarded as an impossibility.

The heaviest burden laid upon a man (for he has laid the burden of sin upon himself) is in a certain sense, time—do we not say, too, that it can be deadly long! And yet, on the other hand, how gentle, how soothing, how seductive a power time has! But this alleviation, this seductiveness, is a new danger. If a man became guilty of something—let but a little time pass, especially if he seems to have made some progress toward betterment: how much more trivial his guilt appears! But is this really so? Is it then also true that if the next moment the thoughtless has forgotten his own guilt, it is then forgotten?

Tell me then if it is possible to speak about this saying, that love is the fulfillment of the law, without judging against one's will, if one's will is merely to judge one's self! Is there any more precise way of expressing how infinitely far a man is from fulfilling the law than this, that the distance is so great that he really cannot even compute it, cannot make up his reckoning! For not only is so much neglected daily, not to speak about what is deserved, but then when some time has passed, one is not even able to state the debt exactly, as it appeared to one's self, because time changes and softens one's judgment about the past—alas! but time never changes the demand, eternity's demand: that love is the fulfillment of the law.

III

B. LOVE IS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE

Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned.—I TIMOTHY 1:5

IF in a single word we wished to point out and indicate the victory Christianity has won over the world, or even more correctly, the victory whereby it has more than overcome the world (since Christianity has never wished to conquer in the worldly sense), that infinite change at which Christianity aims, whereby everything has in truth remained as it was and yet in an infinite sense has become new (for Christianity has never been the friend of neo-mongering)—then I know no briefer or more decisive expression than this: it has made every human relationship between men into a matter of conscience. Christianity has not wished to tumble governments from the throne in order to set itself in their place; it has never in an external sense striven for a place in the world of which it is not a part (for even if it finds a place in the heart's room, it still has no place in the world), and yet it has infinitely changed everything which it permitted and does permit to continue.

As the blood pulses in every nerve, so Christianity in the conscience-relation wishes to penetrate everything. The change is not in the external, not in the obvious, and yet the change is infinite. As if a man instead of having blood in his veins had that divine elixir of which paganism dreamed, so Christianity wishes to inspire the everlasting life, the divine in the human race. That is why someone has said that the Christians were a people of priests, and that is why, when we consider the conscience-relation, we might say that the Christians are a people of kings. For take the humblest, the most downtrodden servant, imagine what we call a really simple, poor, wretched charwoman who makes her living by the humblest kind of labor: she has, from the Christian standpoint, the right, moreover we urgently beseech her in the name of Christianity to exercise it, she has the right while she is carrying on her work, to speak with herself and with God, which in no way retards her work; she has the right to say: "I do this work for a daily wage, but that I do it as carefully as I do, that I do—for conscience's sake!" Ah, from the worldly point of view there is only one man, only one, who recognizes no other obligation than that of conscience: that is the king. And yet that poor woman, from the Christian viewpoint, has the royal right to say to herself before God: "I do it for conscience's sake!" If the woman is dissatisfied because no man will listen to this speech, then it merely proves that she is not Christ-minded. Otherwise, it seems to me that it would still be enough that God has permitted me

to speak thus with Him—covetously to desire freedom of speech in this respect would be a great folly on my part. For there are certain things, and among them particularly the mysteries of inwardness, which lose through being made public, and which are quite lost when the publicity has become the thing of supreme importance to one; moreover there are mysteries which under such circumstances are not merely lost, but straightway become altogether meaningless. Christianity's divine intention is to say in confidence to every man: "Do not worry about the changing forms of the world or about your condition, as if in order to become an example, instead of being a poor working-woman, you had to be called 'My Lady.' Oh, no, dedicate yourself to the Christian way, and then it will show you a point outside the world; by the aid of this point you will be able to move both heaven and earth, moreover, you will accomplish the even greater miracle, you will move heaven and earth so quietly, so easily, that no one notices it."

This is the miracle of Christianity, more wonderful than that one of changing the water into wine; this miracle in all stillness, without any change of rulers, moreover without a hand being moved, of making every man, divinely understood, into a king, so easily, so smoothly, so miraculously, that the world in a certain sense does not need to know it. For in the world outside, there the king will and ought to be the only one who rules according to his conscience; but to obey—for conscience's sake will be permitted everyone; moreover, no one, no one can prevent it. And there within, there far within, where the Christian dwells in the conscience-relation, there is everything changed.

Lo, the world raises a tumult just to bring about a little change; it sets heaven and earth in motion for nothing, like the mountain which brought forth a mouse: Christianity in all stillness brings about the change of the infinite as if it were nothing. It is so quiet, quiet as nothing worldly can be; as quiet as only the dead and inwardness can be; and what else is Christianity but inwardness!

Thus Christianity transforms every relation between men into a conscience-relationship, and thus also into a love-relationship. It is this we now wish to contemplate, that, according to the Christian understanding,

LOVE IS A MATTER OF CONSCIENCE.

In the apostolic words we read, there are evidently contained two premises. First, "The end of the commandment is love." In the preceding deliberation we developed this when we associated the deliberation with another expression, that "Love is the fulfillment of the law." But next there follows in our text: if love is to be the end of the commandment, then it must be from a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of an unfeigned faith. Nevertheless, we prefer to focus our attention

on the one provision, that love is a matter of conscience, in which the other two are essentially contained, and to which they essentially refer.

That a certain kind of Christian love is made a matter of conscience is familiar to everyone. We speak about marriage. Before the minister unites the two in the wedlock which has been their hearts' choice, about which, however, he does not ask them; he asks them first, each one individually: "Have you consulted with God and with your conscience?" Hence the minister refers the love to conscience, as he speaks in a manner strange to them, without using the familiar "thou"; he lays upon the hearts of the two, each one in particular, that it is a matter of conscience; he makes an affair of the heart into a matter of conscience. More clearly and definitely this cannot be expressed, and yet there is still an expression for the same consideration in the form of a question, or in that which each one is specially asked. To ask—the individual is the more general expression for the conscience-relation, and therefore it is also Christianity's essential consideration of the human race, first and foremost to consider all these countless numbers each for himself, each especially as *the* individual.

Consequently, the minister asks the two, each severally, whether he has consulted with God and his conscience. This is the infinite change which in Christianity takes place in all love. It is, like all Christian transformations, so gentle, so secret—because it belongs only to the inwardness of the hidden man, to the incorruptible essence of a soul at peace. What abominations has not the world seen in the relation between man and woman, so that she, almost an animal, was a contemptible being in comparison with the man, a being as of another kind; what a battle there has been to give woman equal rights with man in worldly matters: but Christianity brings about only the change of the infinite, and therefore in all stillness. The external remains in a manner the old; for the man must be the woman's lord, she submissive to him. But in inwardness everything is changed, transformed by the aid of this little question to the woman, as to whether she has consulted with her conscience, so that she will have this man—for lord, for otherwise she does not get him. Still the question of conscience about the matter of conscience makes her in inwardness before God absolutely equal with the man. What Christ said of His kingdom, that it was not of this world, applies to all things Christian. Like a higher order of things, it will everywhere be present, but not apprehended. As a friendly spirit everywhere surrounds those dear to it, follows their every footstep, but may not be pointed out: so will the Christian spirit be a stranger in life because it belongs to another world, a stranger in the world because it belongs to the inner man. Foolish men have foolishly busied themselves in the name of Christianity to make it evident to the world that woman

should be installed in equal rights with man: Christianity has never asked or desired this. It has done everything for women, if she will in a Christian spirit be satisfied with the Christian; if she does not wish this, then she gains only a moderate compensation, for what she loses in trifling externals she can in a worldly sense gain by threats.

So with marriage. But because Christianity through marriage has made earthly love into a matter of conscience, it still does not seem to follow that on the whole it has made love into a matter of conscience. However, there are some who are of a different opinion, in error concerning the Christian teaching. Christianity has not made earthly love, with rare exceptions, into a matter of conscience, but because it has made all love into a matter of conscience, earthly love has also been included. And besides, if any kind of love would be difficult to transform into a matter of conscience, then surely earthly love which is based on impulse and inclination. For impulse and inclination seem to be alone sufficient for the decision of the question of whether love is present or not, and insofar seem to object as strongly to the Christian as the Christian does to them. If, namely, two human beings love each other, something they themselves must know best, and there is otherwise nothing to prevent their union, then why raise difficulties, as Christianity nevertheless does, by saying: "No, they must first answer the question as to whether they have consulted with God and their conscience"? Christianity never cares to make external changes, it never wishes to abolish impulse and inclinations; it wishes only to make an infinite change in the inner man.

And the change of infinity (which is the inwardness of the secret man, which has its direction inward toward the God-relationship, and so is different from the inwardness that is directed outward) Christianity wishes everywhere to bring about; therefore it wishes also to transform all love into a matter of conscience. Therefore it is a wrong conception of Christian love that thinks it is an individual kind of love which, as a rare exception, is made a matter of conscience. After all, one cannot make any individual thing into a matter of conscience; either one must make everything so, as Christianity does, or else nothing at all. Conscience has the inward power of expansiveness, like the omnipresence of God: one cannot restrict it to a single place and say that God is omnipresent in that single place, for that is simply denying His omnipresence. And in the same way to restrict the conscience-relation to something in particular is really to deny the conscience-relation.

If we were to consider a starting point for the teaching of Christianity about love (although it is impossible to fix a starting point in a circular motion), then we cannot say that Christianity begins by making earthly love a matter of conscience, as if this matter had primarily

attracted the attention of scholars, who have something quite different to think about than getting people married. No, Christianity began with fundamentals, and therefore with spiritual teaching about what love is. In order to determine what love is, the teaching begins either with God or with the neighbor, which is the essential Christian teaching, since in order in love to find one's neighbor one must start from God, and in the love for the neighbor must find God. Starting from this fundamental principle Christianity now seizes upon every expression of love, and is zealous for itself. We can therefore just as well say that it is the teaching about man's God-relationship which has made earthly love into a matter of conscience, as to say that it is the teaching about love to one's neighbor. Both statements are equally the Christian protest against the willfulness of impulse and affection. Because man primarily belongs to God before he belongs to any other relationship, he must first be asked whether he has taken counsel with God and with his conscience. Likewise with the woman. And because man, even in relation to the beloved woman, is primarily her neighbor and she is primarily his neighbor, therefore both he and she must be asked severally whether they have consulted with their consciences. In the Christian understanding there is an equality between all men before God, and in the teaching about loving one's neighbor there is equality of all men before God. One perhaps believes that love for a neighbor is something like a castoff earthly love; alas, love for one's neighbor is the last and the highest love, and must therefore be assured a place before the first and highest moment of the lovers themselves.

This is the Christian love. The idea on the contrary, that we should first busy ourselves in finding the beloved, so that in loving the beloved we shall first love the neighbor, is very far from being Christian love. To impulse and inclination this is certainly a strangely chilling preposterousness; but still it is the Christian idea and not more chilling than the spirit is with respect to the sensual or the sensual-psychical, while for the rest it is simply a spiritual attribute to be burning without blazing. Primarily your wife must be your neighbor, the fact that she is your wife is then a closer definition of your special relation to each other. But that which is the foundation of the eternal must also lie at the bottom of every expression of the special.

If this were not so, then how could one find a place for teaching about love for one's neighbor?—and yet one quite commonly does forget it. One speaks heathenishly, without really even noticing it, about earthly love and friendship, arranges his own life in this respect as if he were a heathen, and then one adds a little of the Christian teaching about loving one's neighbor, that is, some other men. But he who does not take care to see that his wife is his neighbor before she is his wife, will

never come to love his neighbor, no matter how many men he loves; he has made his wife an exception. This exception he will now either love too ardently his whole life through, or he will at first love her too ardently and then too coldly. For certainly a wife is loved differently from the friend, and the friend differently from the neighbor, but this is not an essential difference, for the fundamental likeness lies in the category "neighbor." It is with "neighbor" as with the category "human." Every one of us is human, and is thus again the difference he especially is; but the fact of being "human" is the category. No one must look too long at the difference, so that, cowardly or arrogantly, he forgets that he is human; no man through his special dissimilarity is an exception to the fact of being human, but he is first human and then he is the specially different. So Christianity has nothing against the husband loving his wife specially, but he must never love her so specially that she is excluded from being his neighbor, which every human being is; for then he disturbs the Christian category: then his wife is not his neighbor, and therefore the rest of men are not his neighbors. If there were a single living man who by his dissimilarity was excluded from being human, then would the concept "human" be confused: the exception is not human, and neither are the other men human.

One talks about a man loving his own wife conscientiously, or his friend, or his nearest kin; but one often speaks in such a way that what he says involves a great error. Christianity teaches that you shall love every human being, therefore also your wife and your friend, conscientiously; it is a matter of conscience. When, on the contrary, one speaks about loving his wife or his friend conscientiously, then one generally means in the discriminatory sense, or, what amounts to the same thing in the sense of the context, in loving them so preferentially that one has nothing at all to do with other men. But this kind of conscientiousness is from the Christian viewpoint, unconscientiousness. We see too that it is the wife or the friend who will consequently determine whether the love manifested is conscientious. Herein lies the falsity, for it is God who by Himself and by the help of the middle term, "neighbor," looks to see whether the love for wife or friend is conscientious love. Only then is your love a matter of conscience; but still this is clear, that one can only be truly conscientious in a matter that involves the conscience, for otherwise one might speak of being conscientious in receiving stolen goods. Love must first be determined to be a matter of conscience before there can be anything said about loving conscientiously. But love is not defined as a matter of conscience until either God or the neighbor is the middle term, hence, not in earthly love and friendship as such. But if the love in the earthly love and friendship, as such, is not defined as a matter of conscience, then is the

so-called conscientiousness precisely increasingly doubtful, the more firmly established the connection is.

Christian love must not be regarded as a more precise definition of what in paganism and elsewhere has been called love, but as a fundamental change. Christianity has not come into the world in order to teach you some change or other as to how you shall *specially* love your wife or your friend, but in order to teach you how *in common humanity* you shall love all men. And it is also this change which in a Christian way changes earthly love and friendship.

One sometimes hears it said that to ask one about his earthly love is an indiscreet question. But frequently this is not understood quite correctly. The reason it is an indiscreet question is because a man in his earthly love primarily belongs to God. Therefore no one is angry when the priest asks this, for he asks it in the name of God. But this is usually not considered; on the contrary, they only suggest that love is such a personal matter that any third person is an irrelevance, any third person—even God, which from the Christian standpoint is a lack of conscience. Still it is an indiscreet question, altogether inconceivable regarding a matter in which a man does not have a God-relationship; for a God-relationship simply means having a conscience. Therefore a man could not have anything upon his conscience if God did not exist, for the relationship between the individual and God, the God-relationship, is the conscience, and that is why it is so terrible to have even the least thing upon one's conscience, because one is immediately conscious of the infinite weight of God.

Love is a matter of conscience, and hence is not a matter of impulse and inclination; nor is it a matter of emotion, nor a matter for intellectual calculation.

Worldly or merely human reflection is familiar with many kinds of love, and is well-informed about every individual difference, and how the individual differences mutually differ from each other; worldly reflection absorbs itself in the difference of the differences, loses itself—that is, if it is ever possible to lose one's self in superficiality. In Christianity the converse is the case. It really knows only one kind of love, spiritual love, and it does not pay much attention to elaborating on the different ways in which this fundamentally common love may manifest itself. All the distinctions between the different kinds of love are essentially swept away in the Christian love.

The merely human consideration interprets love *either* merely as purely immediate love, as impulse, inclination (earthly love), as affection (friendship), as emotion and affection with one or another discriminating additions of duty, natural relations, custom and so on, *or* as something which is to be aimed at and acquired, because the reason

perceives that being loved and favored is an earthly good, just as having men one loves and favors is an earthly good. All this Christianity is not really concerned with, either with the immediate kind of love, or with the convenient kind. Christianity allows all this to have validity, to have its own significance in external matters; but at the same time it wishes through its teaching about love, which is not calculated on convenience, to let the transformation of the infinite take place inwardly.

There is something wonderful, and perhaps for many something strange, something incomprehensible, in the fact that the eternal Christian power is so indifferent to recognition in externals, something wonderful in the fact that this is precisely earnestness, that the inwardness just for the sake of earnestness thus plays "stranger" in worldliness. There have therefore been times in the course of Christianity when people have believed that it was necessary to betray the secret, and thereby secure Christianity a worldly expression in worldliness. So someone wished to abolish marriage and lived no doubt—hidden in the cloister. Nevertheless, the secret of inwardness, or the inwardness of the hidden man who "holds the mystery of faith," is a far more certain hiding place. The concealment of the cloister in the solitude of the forest, or remote on the inaccessible mountain top, and the hiding place of the quiet dweller in the cloister, were therefore childishness compared with the true Christian inwardness, a childishness like that of a child who hides itself—so that someone shall come and find it. The cloister's hidden occupant informed the world that he had hidden himself, that is, from the Christian point of view he had not seriously hidden himself, but he was playing hide-and-seek. By a similar misunderstanding of the Christian teaching, by a similar childishness, people then believed that it was Christian to betray the mystery, worldly to express the Christian indifference to friendship, to family relations, to patriotism—which nevertheless is untrue, for Christianity is not indifferent to anything secular, on the contrary, it is solely spiritually concerned for everything.

Still to express indifference in such a way that one is eager that those concerned should get to know about it, is not exactly to be indifferent. Such an indifference is as when one man goes to another and says: "I don't care about you." Whereupon the other replies: "Then why do you take the trouble to tell me so?" That, too, would be childishness, it would be a childish way of being conscious of the Christian teaching. But Christianity is too earnest to notice this. Externally it does not wish to bring about any change at all in the external; it wishes to understand the external, to purify it, to consecrate it, and so make everything new, while everything remains old. The Christian may freely marry, freely love his wife, especially as he ought to love her, freely have friends and love his fatherland; but nevertheless there ought to be

in all this a basic understanding between himself and God in the Christian sense, and this is Christianity. For God is not like a man; it is not important to God to inspect the matter, to see for Himself whether His cause triumphs or not; He sees in secret just as well. And it is far from necessary for you to help God to learn that it is He who must help you to learn whether you are weaned from the worldliness which wishes a demonstration. Had Christ felt any need of a demonstration, then would He indeed have acted, He would have summoned the twelve legions of angels. This He simply did not want; on the contrary, He rebuked the disciples who wished to act in the matter because they did not know what manner of spirit they were when they wished for a decision in the external. Christianity simply does not wish a decision in external matters (except insofar as it wishes to establish one or another symbol, which is to worldliness a sign of offense, as, for example, the sacraments); it wishes, on the contrary, in the absence of this, to test the faith of the individual, to prove whether the individual will hold and be content with the mystery of faith. The secular always presses for a decision in externals; distrustful, it does not believe that otherwise there is a decision. But the cause of this distrust is precisely the temptation in which faith must be tested. From the worldly point of view, would it not be a far more certain way to decide, and to make it absolutely certain that God exists, to have an image of Him set up—so that one might then see that He existed? or that a false god existed, which yet does not exist?

Would it not have given a far greater assurance to worldliness if Christ in an external manner, perhaps by showy processions, had tried to prove who He was, instead of assuming the humble form of a servant, yet always inconspicuously, so that He looked exactly like any other man, and from the worldly point of view utterly failed in His task? But this is just the temptation by which faith is tested. And so, too, as touching the Christian interpretation of love. Worldly misunderstanding is insistent to have it expressed in an outward way that Christian love is spiritual love—alas, but this cannot be expressed outwardly in any externality, for spiritual love is precisely inwardness. But this is an offense to worldliness, like everything Christian, and therefore, as it were, the opposite, so that Christianity makes one arbitrarily external symbol the sole decision in the external, like the water in baptism. The world is always dead against; where Christianity wishes to have inwardness, there will secular Christendom have the external; and where Christianity wishes to have the external, there secular Christendom will have inwardness, which may be explained by the fact that where the Christian is, offense stands at his side.

Nevertheless, Christianity knows only one kind of love: spiritual

love; but this can lie at the bottom of and be present in every other expression of love. How strange! For this, the Christian thought of life, has something in common with the thought of death. Imagine a man who wished to gather together all his impressions of the discriminations of life, as between men, which he had seen, and then, when he had reckoned these up, would say, "I see all these different men, but I do not see the man." It is the same with Christian love in relation to the different kinds of love; it is in them all, that is to say, it may be, but the Christian love itself you cannot point out. You know earthly love by the fact that a woman is the beloved, friendship by the friend, love for the fatherland by the object; but the Christian love you cannot even know by the fact that it loves its enemy, for this manifestation of love may also be a secret form of resentment, as if someone did it for the sake of heaping coals of fire on his head. Nor can you know it by the fact that it hates the beloved, for it is really impossible for you to see this, if you are not the one concerned, and you are in the secret with God. From God's side, what confidence, in a certain sense, in a man, and what earnestness! We men, we take care to have certain and infallible signs by which love is known. But God and Christianity have no distinguishing marks—is this not having great, moreover all possible confidence in men! When we in regard to some man waive the sign by which his love is known, then we say that we show unbounded confidence in him, that we will believe in him in spite of all appearances. But why do you think that God shows such confidence? Is it not because He sees in secret? How earnest!

But you never see, nor has any man ever seen, the Christian love, just as no one has ever seen the "human." Nevertheless, "human" is the essential category, and Christian love is the essential love, as, from the Christian viewpoint, there is only one kind of love. For, to repeat, Christianity has not changed anything in what men had formerly learned about loving the beloved, the friend, and so on; it has neither added a little to it, nor taken anything away, but it has transformed everything, has transformed all love. And only to the degree that this fundamental change is followed by a change of inwardness in love and friendship, only insofar has it changed those. And it has done this by making all love a matter of conscience, which with respect to earthly love and friendship, and so on, can just as well indicate a cooling of the passions as it indicates the inwardness of eternal life.

Love is a matter of conscience, and must therefore be of a pure heart and of an unfeigned faith.

"A pure heart." Generally we mention provisionally that a free heart is required for love or in order to give itself up in love: This heart must not belong to anyone or anything else; moreover, even the hand which

gives it away must be free; for it must not be the hand which takes the heart by force and gives it away, but on the contrary, it must be the heart which gives away the hand. And this heart, free as it is, will then find complete freedom in giving itself away—not the bird you release from your hand, not the arrow released from the bowstring, not the branch which has been bent, when it recovers its direction, nothing, nothing is as free as the free heart when it freely gives itself. For the bird is still free only because you release it, and the arrow speeds forth only because it leaves the bowstring, and the branch again grows erect because the restraint ceases; but the free heart does not become free by the cessation of resistance; it was free, it had its freedom—and yet it found its freedom. Beautiful thought, blessed freedom, which finds what it has! However I talk almost like a poet, which may also be permissible if the main point be not forgotten, if it is done precisely to illuminate this—for this is why we endeavor to speak ingratiatingly, if possible, about what it generally pleases men to hear, precisely so that it may not tempt anyone, as if it were lack of sense or ability to speak about this, which held us back from speaking about it, or from speaking exclusively of it as of the highest, forgetting the principal thing: the Christian freedom.

A pure heart is not in this sense a free heart, or it is the free heart which does not here come under consideration; for a pure heart is first and last a *bound heart*. Therefore it is not as pleasant to speak about it as it is to speak about the blessed self-esteem of freedom, and the blessed pleasure of the self-esteem in the boldness of renunciation. A bound heart, moreover in the most profound sense a bound heart—no ship which lies at anchor is so bound as that heart must be which will be pure—this heart must be bound to God. And no king who bound himself by the harshest charter, and no man who bound himself by the most rigorous pledge, and no day-laborer who bound himself for every day, and no private tutor who bound himself for every hour, is so bound. For everyone thus bound can still say how far he is bound, but the heart must be bound illimitably to God, if it will be pure. And no power can bind like this; for the king can die and escape his charter, and the lord can die so the pledge of the day-laborer ceases, and the time of instruction can pass—but God does not die, and the bond which binds to Him is never broken.

Thus must the heart be bound. You who burn with the desire for earthly love, or with the craving for friendship, remember that what you say about freedom has never been denied by Christianity; but yet there must first be this infinite bond, if the heart of the beloved and your own will be pure! Consequently, first the infinite binding, and then the talk about freedom may begin. There is a strange word which is

much used in philosophy, but even more in ordinary business; it is heard so often in the streets and alleys, in business circles and in the mouths of businessmen: it is the word "priority"; for philosophy talks much about God's priority, and businessmen talk about priorities. So let us use this strange word to express the thought so that it will most certainly make the right impression; let us say: Christianity teaches that God has the first priority. Philosophy does not speak quite this way about God's priority; it would rather forget what businessmen know about priorities, that a priority is a claim. God has the first priority, and everything which a man owns, is pledged as a security for this claim. If you remember this, then for the rest you may talk as much as you please about the pleasure of freedom. Oh, but if you really remember this, then this pleasure will not tempt you.

The free heart has no consideration for anything; heedless, it plunges into the pleasure of renunciation; but the heart infinitely bound to God has an infinite consideration; and not even the one who every moment must use the most manifold consideration is so bound by consideration as the heart which is infinitely bound to God. Wherever it is, in solitude by itself, or filled with the thought of others or with others, whatever an infinitely bound heart otherwise occupies itself with, it is always considerate. You who speak so beautifully about how much the beloved means to you, or you to the beloved, remember that this consideration must first be in your soul as in the beloved's, if a pure heart will be given away in love! This consideration must be the first and the last; from this consideration there can be no separation without guilt and sin.

The free heart has no history; when it renounced itself it acquired no history of its love, happy or unhappy. But the heart infinitely bound to God has a preceding history, and therefore it understands that earthly love and friendship are but an interlude, a contribution to this, the sole history of love, the first and the last. You who know how to speak so beautifully about earthly love and friendship, if you understood that these constitute only a very little section within that eternal history: how brief you would be compared with the brevity of the section! You begin your history with the beginning of love and you end with a grave. But that eternal history of love began far earlier; it began with your beginning, when you came into existence from nothing, and as truly as you do not become nothing, so truly the history does not end with the grave. For when the deathbed is prepared for you, when you have gone to bed, never more to rise, and they only wait for you to turn to the other side to die, and the stillness grows about you—when gradually the nearer friends go away, and the stillness grows because only the dearest remain, while death comes nearer you; then when the dearest

go softly away, and the stillness grows, because only your own family remain; and when then the last one has bent for the last time over you and turns away, for now you turn to the side of death: there yet remains One by that side, He the last at the deathbed, He who was the first, God, the living God—if for the rest your heart was pure, which it became only by loving Him.

There is this to be said about the pure heart and about love being a matter of conscience. If love and earthly love constitute the chief pleasures of life, so that the happy man can say with truth: "Now for the first time I live," so it is the joy of life merely to hear the lover talk about his happiness, about life, that is, about its pleasure: then must the dead speak about that conscientious love, the dead who, it is well to note, did not become tired of life, but simply won the joy of eternity. But it is a dead man who speaks, and this seems so forbidding to many that they dare not listen to his glad message, while everyone is glad to listen to one of whom we say in a superior way, "He is alive." And yet death must come, and just at the moment when his contemporaries are joyfully wishing the happy man a long life, eternity says, "Die," if otherwise your heart will be pure. For no doubt there was someone who became happy, indescribably happy, or unhappy, by loving a human being; but no man's heart ever became pure unless it became so through loving God.

"An unfeigned faith." Could there ever be any more abominable combination possible than love—and duplicity? Still such a combination is an impossibility, for to love deceitfully is to hate. And this not only holds true about duplicity, but it is impossible to associate the least lack of sincerity with the idea of loving. As soon as any sincerity is lacking, then there is always something concealed, but the selfish self-love hides itself in this concealment, and insofar as this self-love is present in a man, he does not love. In sincerity the lover offers himself to the beloved; and no mirror is so accurate in catching the least trifle as sincerity is, if it is true sincerity; or if in the lovers there is the true fidelity which is reflected in the mirror of sincerity, which love holds between them.

But now if two men are thus able to become in sincerity intelligible to each other, is it not somewhat arbitrary for Christianity to speak about an unfeigned faith in another sense, insofar as by that it means sincerity before God? Is it not exactly necessary, if two men are to love each other in an unfeigned faith, that this must be preceded by an individual sincerity toward God? For is there dissimulation only when a man consciously deceives himself or others? Is it not also dissimulation when a man does not know himself? And can such a man promise love from an unfeigned faith, or can he—keep what he promises? Aye, he

may do that, but if he cannot promise, can he then keep what he cannot even promise? And one who does not know himself cannot promise love from an unfeigned faith.

The thought of confidence contains in itself a reduplication, and it is this: the one with whom a man has the most intimate relationship, hence the relationship which best fitted him to be the object of confidences, or of confidential communications, only in him can this man really confide or trust, or open his heart to him in confidence. But thus the confidence keeps itself to itself, and thus there is, as the essential in the confidence, the unutterable, instead of a man having to believe that the confidence lay in the stating of it. Thus if, humanly speaking, a wife has her most inward relationship with her husband, she may reveal one or another thing in confidence to her parents, but this confidence is a confidence about something confidential. The wife will therefore feel that she is far from being able to confide everything to them or to confide it to them as she confides it to her husband with whom she has her most intimate relationship—but also her most confidential one, and to whom alone she can really open her heart concerning her most intimate relationship, which is her relation to him. Business affairs and unimportant external matters one cannot talk about confidentially, or at least only foolishly and irresponsibly. But see, if a wife wished to tell someone else about her most intimate concern, her relation to her husband, she would herself perceive that there was only one in whom she could completely confide, and this one was the same as the one in whom and with whom she has this relationship.

With whom now has a man his most intimate relationship, with whom can a man have his most intimate relationship? Is it not God? But hence all confidence between men finally becomes only confidence about confidence. Only God *is confidence*, just as He is love. When then two men sincerely pledge their faith to each other, is this then to promise faith to each other, if they first, each one severally, promise and have promised their faith to another? And yet, on the other hand, this is necessary if they, in the Christian sense, would love from an unfeigned faith. If two men absolutely confide in each other, is it absolutely confiding in each other if they first, each one individually, have confided in a third? And yet this is necessary if they wish absolutely to confide in each other, even if in each individual's confidence in God there is the unutterable, which is exactly the sign that their relation to God is the most inward, the most confidential.

How inviting, how attractive the talk sounds about the confidence of two lovers in each other, and yet there is dissimulation in this speech as in this confidence. But if love from an unfeigned faith is to be spoken about, then must the dead speak, and it sounds at first as if it wrought a

division between the two, although they will still be united in the most intimate and confident companionship. Moreover it is like a separation, and yet it is the confidence of eternity which is set between them. Many, many times two have become happy in a confidential relation to each other, but never has any man loved from an unfeigned faith except through the confidence of the separation in God, which is also God's consent to the confidence of the lovers.—Only when it becomes a matter of conscience is there love from a pure heart and from an unfeigned faith.

IV

OUR DUTY TO LOVE THE MEN WE SEE

If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?—I JOHN 4:20

HOW *deeply* is the need for love grounded in man's being! The first thing, if we may speak in this way, which was said about man, and said by the only One who in truth could say it, by God Himself, and about the first man, says just this. We read in the Holy Scriptures: "God said, it is not good for man to be alone." So woman was *taken from* the side of man and *given* to him for a companion—for love and companionship first take something from a man before they give. Therefore throughout all ages everyone who has thought more deeply about the nature of man, has therefore recognized in him this need for companionship. How often it has been said, and repeated again and again; how often has one cried woe upon the loneliness, or pictured the pain of loneliness and its wretchedness; how often has one, wearied by the vitiating, noisy, confused associations of everyday life, wandered out to the solitary place—only to learn again to hunger for companionship! For thus one always returns to that thought of God's, that first thought about man.

In the busy, teeming multitude, which as company is both too much and too little, man becomes tired of company; but the cure does not consist in discovering that God's thought was wrong, not at all; but the healing consists in learning from the very first to understand one's self in the yearning for companionship. So deeply is this need entrenched in human nature that it has remained unchanged since the creation of the first man; no new discovery has been made, but that first observation, one and the same, has been confirmed in many ways, varying from generation to generation in the form of expression, or in the way in which it was presented, or in the turn of the thought.

So deeply is this need grounded in man's nature, and *so essentially* does it belong to the fact of his being human, that even He who was One with the Father, and in community of love was One with the Father and the Holy Spirit, He who loved the whole race, our Lord Jesus Christ, still humanly felt this need to love and be loved by an individual man. He was indeed the God-Man, and so eternally different from every other man, but He was, nevertheless, also true man, tried in everything human. And, on the other side, the fact that He experienced all this, is exactly the expression for the fact that He was essentially human. He was an actual man, and can therefore have sympathy with all things human; He was not an airy form which beckoned in the

clouds, without understanding or wishing to understand what humanly befalls a man. Oh, no, He could have pity on the multitude who needed food, and that in the purely human sense, He who had Himself hungered in the wilderness.

And so too He could sympathize with men in their need to love and to be loved, sympathize in a purely human way. We find this pictured in the Gospel of John. Jesus says to Simon Peter: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" Peter answers Him: "Yea, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." How touching this is! Christ asks: "Lovest thou me *more than these*?" It is almost like a prayer for love. Thus speaks the One to whom it is all important to be the best-loved. Peter himself is conscious of this inconsonance, like that when Jesus would be baptized by John. Therefore Peter not only answers, "Yes," but he adds, "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." This reply indicates the inconsonance. For ordinarily if a man knows that he is loved, because he has heard it asserted before, then he is more than willing to hear it again, and therefore wishes to hear it again, although he knows it in many other ways than by this mere assertion, to which he once more returns, anxious to hear it again. Of course it is in another sense that Christ can be said to know that Peter loves Him. Still, Christ again a second time says to him: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter answers Him: "Aye, Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee." What else is there to answer, while the inconsonance only becomes clearer because the question is asked a second time! Christ says to him the third time: "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" Peter was grieved because He said a third time to him, "Lovest thou me?" and Peter said to Him: "Lord, Thou knowest all things; Thou knowest that I love Thee." Peter does not carry his answer further; instead, in his reply he refers to what Christ must know from experience about Peter's feeling—"Thou knowest that I love Thee," he answers, "*Thou knowest all things*, Thou knowest that I love Thee." Hence Peter says no more, he almost shudders at the inconsonance; for a "yes" is like a real answer to a real question, whereby the questioner learns to know something or learns it more definitely than he knew it before. But One who "knows all things," how can He get to know something, or through another's assurance get to know it more certainly than He knew it before? And yet, if He cannot do this, then neither can He love quite humanly, for this is just the mystery of love, that there is no higher certainty than the beloved's renewed assurance; humanly understood it is unconditionally to be certain of being loved, not of loving, since it is superior to the relation between friend and friend. Terrible contradiction: that the One who is God, loves humanly; for to love humanly is indeed to love an individual

man and to wish to be the one best loved by this particular man. That is why Peter was grieved at the question being asked a third time! For in a similar relation of love between men, there is a new joy in the question being asked three times, and a new joy in answering three times; or else the question repeated too often grieves, because it seems to betray mistrust. But when He who knows all things asks three times, hence finds it necessary to ask three times, then must it not be because, since He knows everything, He knows that the love is not strong enough, not inward enough, not ardent enough, in the one who is questioned, the one who would also deny Him three times? Peter must certainly have thought that this was the reason the Lord found it necessary to ask the question three times—for it truly could not be because the Lord Himself felt the need to hear this "yes" three times; such a thought would be beyond man's power to imagine. Even if the thought is allowed, it is simply out of the question. Oh, but how human! He who answered not a word to the high priests who condemned Him to death, He who answered not a word to Pilate who held His life in his hands—He asks three times if He is loved; moreover, He asks if Peter loves Him—"more than these"!

So deeply is love rooted in human nature, so essentially does it belong to the human; and yet men so frequently find excuses in order to deprive themselves—of this blessedness, hence they elicit deception—in order to deceive themselves, or to make themselves unhappy. Sometimes the excuse assumes the form of sadness; one sighs over men and over his own unhappiness; one can find no one to love. For to sigh over the world and its unhappiness is always easier than to beat one's breast and sigh over one's self. Sometimes the self-deception sounds like an accusation; one accuses men of not being worthy of love—one "groans against" men; for it is always easier to be the accuser than the accused. Sometimes the self-deception lies in the proud self-satisfaction which believes that it seeks in vain for a worthy object of its love—for it is always easier to show superiority by being fastidious about others than by being strict with one's self. And yet, yet we are all agreed that this is an unfortunate attitude, and that such behavior is wrong. And what is it then that is wrong? What other than the constant seeking and rejecting by these men! Such men do not notice that their talk sounds like a mockery of themselves, because the fact of their not being able to find any worthy object for their love among men, indicates that they are themselves utterly lacking in love.

Is it really love to wish to find it outside one's self? I supposed love consisted in bringing it with one. But he who has love in himself when he is seeking an object for his love (and otherwise it is not true that he seeks an object—for his love), he will easily, and the greater his love

the more easily, find an object, and find it to be such that it is lovable. For the ability to love a man in spite of his weaknesses and faults and imperfections is not the perfect love, but perfect love consists in being able to find him lovable in spite of and with his weaknesses and faults and imperfections.

Let us understand each other. It is one thing to be finicky and wish to eat only the most delicate and rarest dishes, most exquisitely prepared, and even when they are of this kind, then to be finicky in finding one fault or another in them. It is quite a different matter not only to be able to eat the more modest fare, but to be able to find this simpler fare the choicest, because the problem set for him is not to develop his fastidiousness, but to transform himself and his tastes.

Or if there were two artists, and one of them were to say: "I have traveled a great deal in my time and have looked about a good bit in the world, but I have looked in vain for a man who was worth painting. I have never found a face which pictured such perfect beauty that I could decide to draw it; in every face I have always found one or another little defect, and therefore I have sought in vain." Would this be a sign that he was a great artist? On the other hand, the second artist said: "Now I do not really pretend to be an artist. I have not traveled in foreign countries, but have remained in the little circle of people who were my neighbors; among these I have not found a single face so insignificant or so irregular that I could not distinguish a more beautiful side and discover something pleasing in it. Therefore the art I practice gives me pleasure and satisfies me, without my claiming to be an artist." Would this not indicate that this man really was an artist, who by bringing a certain something with him found at home what the much-traveled artist found nowhere in the world, perhaps because he did not bring a certain something with him! Hence the second man was the artist.

Would it not be distressing if that which was intended to embellish life were only to be a curse upon it, so that "art," instead of beautifying life for us, merely fastidiously discovered that none of us was beautiful! And how much more distressing as well as confusing it would be if love should only become a curse, because its requirement alone revealed that none of us was worthy of love, instead of love being precisely recognizable by the fact that it is loving enough to find something lovable in all of us, hence loving enough to be able to love all of us.

It is a distressing absurdity, which is, however, altogether too general, always to be perpetually talking about how the object of love ought to be, in order to be worthy of love, instead of talking about how love ought to be in order to be love. It is so common, not only in daily life, but, oh, how often is it not seen, that even the one who calls himself a

poet ascribes all his merit to the refined, soft, aristocratic fastidiousness which, in contrast to loving, cold-bloodedly knows how to reject and reject; assumes it to be his task in this respect to initiate men into all the abominable mysteries of fastidiousness. Still some are inclined to do this; many are still so disposed, so inquisitive to learn this, that is, to get a knowledge which really only serves to embitter life for themselves and others! For of how much in life does it not hold true that if one had never learned it, then one would have found everything beautiful, or at least more beautiful than one does. But after one has been infected with the taint of fastidiousness, how difficult it becomes to regain what he lost, the natural gifts of good nature and love, with which God has fundamentally endowed every man!

But if no one else can or will, an apostle always knows how to lead us in the right way in this respect, the right way which both leads us to do right to others and to make ourselves happy. So we have chosen some words of the apostle John: "If any of you say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" We shall make these words the object of our reflection, as rejoicing in the task, we choose to speak about

THE DUTY OF LOVING THE MEN WE SEE.

But this is not to be understood as if the discourse were about loving all the men we see, for that is the love for the neighbor which we discussed earlier. On the contrary, let it be understood that the discourse concerns the duty of finding those in the actual world whom we might love in particular, and in loving them to love the men we see. *If this is our duty, then the task does not consist in finding—the lovable object; but the task consists in finding the object already given or chosen—lovable, and in continuing to find him lovable however changed he is.*

However, we shall first consider a little difficulty respecting the Gospel passage read, a difficulty which it might occur to an earthly shrewdness, perhaps conceited at its own cleverness, to raise, whether it actually does so or not. When the apostle says: "He who does not love his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" then a clever man might raise the objection that this is a deceptive turn of thought. For he had really assured himself that the brother he had seen was not worthy of love, but from this fact (that he did not love the one he regarded as undeserving of love) how could it be inferred that there was anything to prevent such a man from loving God whom he had not seen? And yet the apostle believes that there is something which prevents such a man from loving God, although by this word "brother" he certainly is not speaking about some quite definite

individual man, but chiefly about the matter of loving men. The apostle believes that it is a divine contention that is submitted against the unreliability of a man's assertion about loving the invisible, when it appears that this man does not love the visible; whereas it might seem just as visionary to say that one loves the invisible by not loving anything visible. It is a divine contention submitted against human romanticism with respect to loving God, for it is visionary, even if it is not hypocritical, thus to wish to love the invisible. The matter is quite simple. Man must begin by loving the unseen, God, for thereby he will himself learn what it means to love; but the fact that he really loves the unseen will be recognized precisely by the fact that he loves the brother he sees; the more he loves the unseen, the more he will love the men he sees. Not conversely, that the more he rejects those he sees, the more he loves the unseen. If that were true then God would be transformed into an unreal something, a figment of the imagination. Therefore only a hypocrite and a deceiver would hit upon such ideas for the sake of finding an excuse; or one who misrepresents God by making it seem as if God were jealous for Himself and for being loved, instead of the blessed God being merciful, and, as it were, constantly subordinating Himself by saying: "If you will love me, then love the men you see; what you do to them you do to me."

God is too exalted to be able simply to accept a man's love, to say nothing of His being able to find pleasure in those things in which a visionary delights. If someone says about a gift through which he would be able to help his parents, that it is "Corban," that is, that it is already dedicated to God, this is not well-pleasing to God. If you wish to show that it is dedicated to God, then give it in the name of God. If you wish to show that your life is dedicated to the service of God, then let it serve men, but always in the name of God. God is not a party to existence in such a way that He demands His share for Himself. He demands everything, but when you bring it you learn to know at once, if I may speak thus, by the endorsement on it, where it will be further negotiated; for God demands nothing for Himself, although He demands everything from you. So the apostle's words, if rightly understood, lead directly to the subject of the discourse.

When it is a duty to love the men one sees, then *must one primarily renounce all imaginative and overstrained ideas of a dream-world, where the object of love would be to seek and to find; that is, one must become sober, gain reality and truth by finding and remaining in the world of reality, as the sole appointed task.*

The most dangerous of all evasions as regards loving, is to wish to love only the invisible, or that one has not seen. This evasion is so high-flying that it soars completely above reality; it is so intoxicating

that it easily tempts and easily imagines itself to be the all-supreme and most perfect kind of love. Certainly it seldom occurs to a man shamelessly to speak derogatorily about loving; on the contrary, that deception is more general by which men defraud themselves of really beginning to love, just because they talk too enthusiastically about loving and of love. The reason for this has a far deeper ground than we might suppose; otherwise the confusion could not have established itself as firmly as it has, the confusion that arises from calling *that* a misfortune which is a fault: the fact of their not finding any object of love whereby they still further hindered themselves from finding it; for as soon as they realized that it was their own fault, then they found it. The general conception of love is that it is the opened eye of admiration which is looking for superiority and perfections. That is why one complains that one looks in vain. We shall not attempt to decide how far the individual is right or not; whether or not that lovable superiority and perfection which he seeks, are to be found; whether he has not confused his search by his fastidiousness. No, we shall not dispute in this way. We shall not dispute within the limits of this conception of love, for this whole conception is an error, since love is rather the closed eye of forbearance and mildness, which does not see the deficiencies and the imperfections.

But it is very essential that we emphasize the difference between these two conceptions, for there is a world of difference, a revolutionary difference between them. It is only the latter conception that is true, the first is an error. And it is well known that an error never halts of itself, it only leads farther and farther astray, so it becomes increasingly difficult to find the way back to truth. The way of error is easy to find, but to find the way back is so difficult—as we are told in the legend about that mountain of Venus, which must lie somewhere on earth, that no one who found his way to it could ever find his way back. So if a man with the wrong idea of what love is, goes out into the world, then he seeks, and seeks, as he believes, to find the object of love, but, as he thinks, in vain. However, he does not change his conception of what it is; on the contrary, enriched by his manifold knowledge of the fastidious, he seeks ever more fastidiously, but, as he believes, in vain. It never occurs to him that the mistake might lie in himself or in his wrong conception of what love is. On the contrary, the more refined he becomes in his fastidiousness, the more exalted opinion he entertains of himself and of the perfection of his conception of love—the more clearly he sees how imperfect men are, and this can be discovered only through the assistance of his own perfection! Nevertheless, he is absolutely certain that this is not his fault, that he does not act from any evil or hateful motive—he who is seeking only love.

For far be it from him to renounce love, he who so vividly realizes

how his conception of it becomes ever more enthusiastic—what indeed could ever become more enthusiastic than an error! And he has not checked the error, exactly the reverse; by its aid he has made himself giddy—in loving the invisible, an apparition one does not see. Or does not all this come to one and the same thing: *seeing an apparition*—and: *not seeing*? For if you take away the apparition you see nothing, the man himself admits that; but the man forgets that if you take *away* the *seeing*, then you still *see* an apparition. But, as was said, he will not give up love or talk humbly about it; he will talk enthusiastically about it and preserve it—the love of the unseen. Distressing error! We say about worldly honor and power, about wealth and happiness, that it is as a vapor, and this is indeed true. But that the strongest power in man, a power which according to his own definition is simply nothing less, since it is life and strength, that this should become as vapor, and that the man intoxicated by these vapors, proudly believes that he has apprehended the highest—that man has indeed seized upon clouds and fancies, which always soar high above reality: lo, that is terrible! Ordinarily one devoutly warns against wasting the gifts of God; but which of God's gifts is comparable to the love which he implanted in the human heart? Alas, and then to see it wasted in this way! For the clever man believes—foolishly, that one wastes his love in loving the imperfect, the weak men. I should suppose that this would be to apply his love, to make use of it. But to be able to find no object for love, to waste it in a vain search, to squander it in empty space by loving the unseen: that is truly wasting it.

Therefore be sober, come to your senses; understand that the fault lies in your conception of love, that this ought to constitute a claim, a most glorious one, since the whole of existence would not be able to pay it, any more than you can prove your right to collect this claim. At the very moment in which you changed your conception of love, that it is the exact opposite of a claim, that it is an outstanding indebtedness to which God binds you; that very moment you have found reality. And just this is your duty, thus with closed eyes (for in love you close your eyes to weakness and frailty and imperfection) to find reality, instead of with open eyes (aye, open and staring like a sleepwalker's) to overlook reality. For duty this constitutes the first condition, so that in loving at all you may come to love the men you see. The condition is to find a foothold of reality. Error always vacillates, that is why it sometimes looks so easy and so spiritual, because it is so airy. Truth takes firm and therefore sometimes difficult steps. It stands upon solid ground, and therefore sometimes looks so simple. There is also a significant change: instead of having a claim to recover to get a duty to fulfill; instead of having a world to traverse to take, as it were, a world upon

one's shoulders; instead of ardently wishing to seek the pleasant fruit of admiration to have to bear patiently with want. Ah, what a change! And yet it is through this change that love comes into being, the love which can perfect the duty: in loving, to love the men we see.

When it is a duty in loving to love the men we see, *then it is important that in loving the individual, actual man, we do not slip in an imagined conception of how we believe or might wish that this man should be.* He who allows himself to do this does not love the man he sees, but again something unseen, his own idea, or something like it.

There is in loving a manner of conduct which contains a considerable alloy of doubt and fastidiousness. It is one thing to reject and reject, and never find an object worthy of love; it is another thing in loving what one calls the object of his love, truly and sincerely to perfect this duty in loving what he sees. It is in truth a worthy wish, a truly worthy wish, that the one we love should possess the lovable perfections; we wish it not merely for our own sake, but also for his. Above all, it is worth while to wish and to pray that the one we love might always act and be such as we are able to approve of and agree with. But, for God's sake, let us not forget that it is not to our credit if he is so, even less to our credit to demand it of him—should any question of our merit arise, which is, however, improper and unseemly talk in relation to love, which should simply be to love equally faithfully and tenderly.

But there is a fastidiousness which always, as it were, works against love, and wishes to prevent it from loving what it sees, when the fastidiousness with a wavering and yet in a certain sense critical glance, effaces the actual form of love or offends against it, and cunningly demands to see something else. There are men about whom one may say that they have not yet taken form, that their reality has not consolidated itself, because inwardly they cannot make up their minds as to what they are and what they wish to be. But by the way in which one sees, one can also make another man's form vacillating and unreal, because the love, which should love the man it sees, cannot really decide, but sometimes would do away with one fault in its object; sometimes would demand a perfection in it, which would be, if I may say so, as if a bargain was not quite completed. Yet the one who by loving in this way is inclined to be fastidious, does not love the man he sees, and really makes his love objectionable, as hard for the beloved.

Your beloved, your friend, is also in the more general sense a man, and he exists as such for the rest of us; but for you he should essentially exist as the beloved, if you will to perfect your duty in loving the man you see. If there is duplicity in your relationship, so that he partly exists for you in a general sense as an individual man, partly in a particular sense as the beloved, then you do not love the man you see. It is

rather as if you had in that sense two ears, so that you do not as ordinarily hear the same thing with both ears, but you hear one thing with one ear, and another thing with the other ear. You hear with one ear what he says, and whether it is wise and correct and shrewd and spiritual and so on; alas, and with the other ear you hear that it is the voice of the beloved. You scrutinize him probingly with one eye, searchingly, critically, alas, and only with the other eye do you see that he is the beloved. Oh, but thus to divide, that is not to love the man one sees. Is it not as if there were constantly a third party present, even when the two are alone, a third party who tests and rejects, a third party who disturbs the inwardness, a third party who may sometimes make the concerned disgusted with himself and his love, because it is so critical; a third party who would alarm the beloved if he knew that this third party was present! What, too, does it mean, that this third party is present? It signifies that if . . . this or that is not in accordance with your wish, then you might not love; hence the third party signifies divorce, separation; so consequently the thought of separation is present—confidentially, alas, as when in paganism the destructive being is insanely included in the unity of the godhead. Does the presence of the third party not signify that the love-relationship is yet in a certain sense no relationship, in that you stand above the relationship and test the beloved? Do you not consider that in such a case something else is tested, whether you really have love, or rather that there is something else decided, that you do not really love? For life certainly has tests enough, and these tests should precisely find the lovers, find friend and friend, united in order to endure the test. But if the test is to enter into the relationship, then a treachery has been committed.

Truly this mysterious reserve is the most dangerous kind of faithlessness; such a man does not break his vow, but he makes it constantly indecisive whether he is bound by his vow. Is it not faithlessness when your friend clasps your hand, and there is in this handclasp something vague, as if it were doubtful to him who pressed your hand how closely at that moment he corresponded to your idea of him, so that you would reciprocate in the same way? Is the relationship to be such that it must every moment begin from the beginning to come into the relationship; is this to love the man you see, every moment to test him, as if it were the first time you saw him? It is abhorrent to see the fastidiousness which rejects all food, but it is also abhorrent to see the one who, to be sure, eats the food which is politely offered him, and yet in a certain sense does not eat, but constantly, as if he were already satiated, only tastes of the food or takes pains to taste a tidbit, while he is satiated by plainer food.

No, if a man wishes to fulfill his duty in loving to love the men he

sees, then he must not only find those he loves among actual men, but he must eradicate all doubt and fastidiousness in loving them, so that in earnestness and truth he loves them as they are; he must in earnestness and truth apprehend the task: to find the given or the chosen object lovable. We do not mean by this to recommend a childish infatuation with the accidental circumstances of the beloved, even less a fond indulgence in the wrong place; far from it, the earnestness lies in the fact that the relationship itself must with a united effort fight against the imperfect, overcome the defects, remove the differences. This is earnestness; fastidiousness makes the relationship itself ambiguous. His weakness or his fault does not make the one a stranger to the other, but the union regards the weaker as the stranger, which it is equally important to both to overcome and to remove. It is not you who because of the weakness of the beloved must, as it were, withdraw from him, or make your relationship less close; on the contrary, the two must hold themselves more closely and inwardly together in order to remove the weakness. As soon as the relationship is ambiguous, so that you do not love the man you see, then it is as if you demanded something else in order to be able to love; since on the contrary, the fault or the weakness makes the relationship more inward, not as if the fault should be retained, but just in order to overcome it, so you love the man you see. You see the fault, but the fact that the relationship becomes more inward, shows precisely that you love the man in whom you still see the fault or the weakness or the imperfection.

As there are hypocritical tears, hypocritical sighing and complaining about the world, so too is there hypocritical sorrow over the weaknesses and imperfections of the beloved. It is so easy and so complacent to wish the beloved to have all possible perfections, and then, if some are lacking, it is again so easy and so complacent to sigh and sorrow and become self-important over one's own presumably pure and profound distress. It is perhaps, on the whole, a more general form of sensualism selfishly to wish to show off the beloved or the friend, and to wish to despair over each insignificant fault. But would that be loving the men we see? Oh, no, the men we see, and hence ourselves when others see us, are not so perfect; and yet it is so often the case that a man develops in himself this delicate frailty which is only calculated to love the complete conception of the perfect. And although we are all of us so imperfect, one rarely sees the strong, sound, efficient love which is calculated to love those imperfect ones, that is, the men we see.

When in loving it is a duty to love the men we see, *then is there no limit to the love; if the duty is fulfilled, the love must be limitless, that is, unchanged, however its object changes.*

Let us consider what we were reminded of in the introduction to this

meditation: the relation between Christ and Peter—I wonder if Peter, especially in his relation to Christ, was like an epitome of all perfections. And, on the other side, Christ certainly knew his faults! Let us speak in human fashion about this relation. God knows how many generally insignificant trifles are yet scrupulously gathered up and carefully concealed, which either at once, or, what is even more distressing, after a long lapse of time, give us occasion to accuse the one the other of selfishness, faithlessness or treachery. God knows how very infrequently the accuser makes even a slight effort to put himself in the place of the accused, so that the judgment, the strict, the merciless judgment, might not be an overhasty one, but judicious, but at least insofar thoughtful, that it knows with certainty about that which it judges. God knows how often one sees this sorry sight, how passion immediately equips even the perhaps ordinarily restricted man, if he is presumably the injured party, with a shrewdness which is astonishing; and on the other hand, how it strikes even the perhaps ordinarily intelligent man with stupidity with respect to every appeasing, extenuating, exonerating interpretation of the injury, because it pleases the offended passion to be shrewdly blind: but this we shall all agree upon, that if in a relation between two friends there had happened what happened to Christ with Peter, then there would truly be a sufficient reason for breaking—with such a traitor. If your life had been brought into the utmost danger, and you had a friend who of his own accord had sworn a solemn oath of loyalty, moreover, of being willing to lay down his life for you; if then when the danger came, he did not even remain away (that would almost have been more forgiveable), no, he came, he was present, but he did not move a hand; he stood and looked on quietly, or, no, he did not stand quietly, his only thought was to save himself and on any condition; he did not even take to flight (that would almost have been more forgivable), no, he remained standing as a spectator, which he asserted that he was—by denying you: what then? We shall not even let the apodosis follow; let us only present the relationship very vividly and speak in quite human fashion about it. Hence, you stood accused by your enemies, condemned by your enemies. It was literally true that you stood everywhere surrounded by enemies. The powerful, who might perhaps have been able to understand you, had hardened themselves against you, they hated you. Therefore, you now stood accused and condemned—while a blinded, raging mob hurled insults against you; maddened, even rejoiced at the thought that your blood would be upon them and upon their children. And this pleased the rulers who ordinarily despised the mob so deeply; it pleased them because it satisfied their hatred, so that it was animal ferocity and the lowest paltriness which had found its victim and its prey in you. You had reconciled yourself to your fate; you understood that there was

not a single word to say, since the insult only sought occasion, so that the magnanimous word about your innocence would only give insult a new occasion, as if it were defiance; so the clearest proof of your righteousness would embitter the mob and make the insults even more violent; so that an expression of pain would give a new occasion for insults, as if it had expressed cowardice. Thus you stood, an outcast from human society, and yet not an outcast; you stood surrounded by men enough, but none of them saw in you a man, even if in another sense they saw in you a man, for they would not have treated a wild beast so inhumanly. Oh, horror, more terrible than if you had fallen among wild beasts; for I wonder if even the nightly howling of the most bloodthirsty beasts of prey is as horrible as the inhumanity of a raging mob. I wonder if in a herd of wild animals one beast can so excite another to a greater ferocity than that which is simply natural, as in an innocent crowd one man can excite another to more than animal bloodthirstiness and cruelty. I wonder if the baleful or burning eye of the most bloodthirsty beast has such an evil burning as this which inflames the eye of the individual when, excited and exciting, he joins with the wild, raging mob! So you stood accused, condemned, insulted; vainly you looked about to discover a figure which still resembled a man, to say nothing of a friendly face on which your eye could rest—then you saw him, your friend, but he denied you, and the insult which had before sounded raucous enough was now like an echo multiplied a hundredfold! If this had happened to you, would you not truly have considered yourself magnanimous if, instead of considering revenge, you had turned your eyes away from him and said to yourself: "I do not care to look at this traitor"!

How differently Christ acted! He did not turn His eyes away from Peter, as if He were unconscious that Peter existed; He did not say, "I will not look at this traitor"; He did not leave him to shift for himself. No, He "looked upon him"; He reminded him at once with a glance; had it been possible He certainly would not have refused to speak to him. And how did Christ look at Peter? Was it an indignant glance? Was it like a glance of dismissal? Oh, no, it was as when a mother sees her child in danger through his own carelessness, and then, if she is not able to reach the child, she overtakes it with her reproachful yet also saving glance. But was Peter in danger? Ah, who cannot see this: for how terrible for a man to have denied his friend! But an injured friend cannot see in the passion of anger that the one who denied him is in danger. But He who is called the Saviour of the world, He could see clearly where the danger was, that it was Peter who was in danger, Peter, who should and must be saved! The Saviour of the world was not mistaken. He did not see His cause lost if Peter did not

hasten to help Him, but He saw Peter lost if He did not hasten to save him. I wonder if there lives or ever has lived a man who cannot understand this which is so clear and so obvious; and yet Christ is the only one who saw this at the critical moment, when He Himself was the accused, the condemned, the mocked, the spit-upon, the denied.

A man is seldom tried in a crisis which involves life and death, and hence he seldom gets occasion to test the devotion of friendship to its extreme limit. But merely in some more important moment to find timidity and shrewdness where you were prepared because of your friendship to look for courage and resolution; to find duplicity, fickleness and evasion instead of candor, decision and refuge; to find only frivolity instead of sober-minded reflection: alas, how difficult then in the haste of the moment and the heat of passion, to be immediately able to understand on which side the danger lies, which one of the friends is in the greater danger, you or he who thus leaves you in the lurch; how difficult then to love the man you see—when you see him so changed!

Nowadays we are accustomed to praise Christ's attitude towards Peter; let us guard against this commendation becoming a delusion, a figment of the imagination, because we are not able or willing to exert our thought, to imagine ourselves contemporary with the event, so that while we praise Christ on the one hand, on the other hand, insofar as we are contemporaneous with a similar event, we act and speak quite differently. We have no report handed down concerning the contemporary interpretation of Christ's attitude towards Peter, but if you meet them, those contemporaries, then ask them, and you will learn that on this occasion, just as on the occasion of almost everything which Christ did, people said: "The fool! Even granting that his case was desperately lost, yet not to have power to muster all his strength for the last time in a single glance which would crush this traitor! What craven, unmanly weakness! Is that acting like a man!" Thus was He judged, and the insult found a new expression. Or it would be said by the powerful ruler who intended to review the circumstances: "Well, why did he seek his company with publicans and sinners, his followers among the poorest class of people? He should have associated himself with us, the leaders of the synagogue, but as it is, he gets what he deserves. This shows how far one can rely on that kind of people. Well, as he has always abandoned himself to that class, he keeps it up to the last. He does not even become infuriated by their shabby faithlessness."

Perhaps the more clever among them, wishing to seem magnanimous, would explain: "The fact that the high priests have allowed him to be taken, the fact that he, fanatic though he was, now sees that everything is lost, may have weakened his reason and broken his courage, so that

he has become depressed in a cowardly, spiritless stupor. Perhaps this explains his forgiving such betrayal, for of course no real man would behave in this way!" Alas, it is only too true: no man does behave in this way. That is just why Christ's life furnishes the only instance where a teacher, just at the moment His case is lost along with His life, and everything is most terribly forfeited through the apostasy of His disciple, by His glance at that very instant wins His most zealous adherent in this disciple, and thus His cause to a great extent, although the latter fact is hidden from everyone.

Christ's love for Peter was, therefore, boundless; in loving Peter He perfected the task of loving the man one sees. He did not say: "Peter must first be changed and become another man before I can love him." No, exactly the converse. He said: "Peter is Peter, and I love him. My love, if it amounts to anything, will precisely help him to become another man." Hence He did not break off His friendship, in order perhaps to resume it again when Peter had become another man. No, He maintained His friendship unchanged, and through that was helpful to Peter in becoming another man. Do you believe that without this loyal friendship of Christ Peter would have been rewon? But it is so easy to be a friend when this does not entail anything more than asking some definite favor from the friend, and, if the friend does not comply with this request, then allowing the friendship to lapse, until it is perhaps renewed when he complies with the request. Is this the relation of friendship? Who should be more ready to help an erring one than the one who calls himself his friend, even if the fault was committed against the friend! But the friend avoids him and says (and it is as if some third party were speaking): "When he changes and becomes another man, then he may perhaps again be my friend." And it is not far from being the case that we men regard such conduct as magnanimous. But truly, it is far from being true that a man can say about such a friend, that in loving he loves the man he sees.

Christ's love was boundless, as it must be if this is to be perfected: in loving to love the man one sees. This is very easy to perceive. However much and however a man is changed, he is not yet so changed that he becomes invisible. If this—the impossible—is not the case, then we see him, and our duty is to love the man we see. Generally we are inclined to believe that when a man has essentially changed for the worse, he is then so changed that one is excused from loving him. What a confusion of language: to be excused—from loving, as if it were a compulsory matter, a burden one wished to cast off! But Christianity asks: "Can you because of this change no longer see him?" To this the answer must be: "Certainly I can see him. I see exactly that he is no longer worthy of love." But if you see *that*, then you do not really

see him (which in another sense you cannot deny doing), you see only the unworthiness, the imperfection, and thereby you admit that when you loved him, in another sense you did not love him, but you loved only his superiority and his perfections. From the Christian standpoint, on the contrary, loving consists exactly in loving the man one sees. The emphasis lies not on loving the perfections one sees in a man, but the emphasis is placed on the man one sees, whether one now sees in this man perfections or imperfections, moreover, no matter how sadly this man has changed, since he still has not ceased to be the same man. He who loves the perfections he sees in a man, does not see the man, and therefore he ceases to love when the perfections cease, when a change enters, which change, even if distressing, still does not indicate that the man has ceased to exist. Alas, but even the wisest and most intelligent purely human interpretations of love are still somewhat highfalutin, somewhat hazy; Christian love, on the other hand, descended from heaven to earth. Its direction is consequently opposite. Christian love will not soar to heaven, for it comes from heaven and with heaven; it descends and thereby it succeeds in loving the same man in all the changes, because it sees the same man in all the changes. The merely human love is constantly prepared, as it were, to flee away after, or to flee away with the perfections of the beloved. We say about a seducer that he steals a maiden's heart; but we must say about all merely human love, even when it is most beautiful, that there is a little thievishness in it, that it still steals the perfections of the beloved, while the Christian love grants the beloved all his imperfections and weaknesses, and in all his changes abides with him, loving the man it sees.

If this were not so, then Christ would never have come in love; for where would He have found the perfect! Wonderful! What it would really do would be to prevent Christ from finding the perfect; for was He not Himself exactly the perfect, which is recognized by His boundless love for the men He saw? What a wonderful crossing of concepts! We speak constantly with regard to love, about the perfect and the complete; Christianity also speaks constantly in relation to love about the perfect and the complete: ah, but we men speak about finding the perfect in order to love him; Christianity speaks about being the perfect which illimitably loves the man it sees. We men wish to look up in order to see the object of perfection (the tendency is still constantly towards the invisible), but in Christ perfection looked down to earth and loved the man it saw. And from Christianity we should learn, for it is still so in a far more general sense than is realized, that no one ascends to heaven except One who first descended from heaven: however enthusiastic the speech sounds about soaring to heaven, it is a delusion, unless you first, as Christianity says, descend from heaven. But from the Christian point

of view to descend from heaven means to love infinitely the man you see, just as you see him. If you will, therefore, become perfect in love, then strive to perfect this duty, in loving to love the man you see; to love him just as you see him, with all his imperfections and weaknesses; to love him as you see him when he has completely changed, when he no longer loves you, but perhaps indifferently turns away to love another; to love him as you see him when he betrays and denies you.

V

OUR DUTY TO REMAIN IN THE DEBT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER

Owe no man anything but to love one another.—ROMANS 13:8

MEN have tried in various ways to depict and describe how love is felt by the one who has it, his condition in love, or what it means to love. Love has been called a feeling, a mood, a life, a passion; yet since these are very general definitions, an effort has been made to describe love more precisely. Someone has called it a want, but it is worth noticing that the lover constantly wants what he already possesses; it has been called a longing, but, it is well to note, a constant longing for something the lover already has—for otherwise the love described is an unhappy one.

That simple wise man of old said that "love is the son of wealth and poverty." Who in truth could be poorer than the one who has never loved! But, on the other hand, does even the poorest, who bending over gleans up the crumbs and is humbly grateful for a penny, really have any idea how small a trifle may have infinite value for the lover; how small the trifle may be which the lover (in his poverty) gathers up with infinite care and cautiously hides—like the most precious treasure! I wonder if even the poorest is able to see that which may be so little that only the sharp glance of passion (love in its poverty!) sees and tremendously magnifies! But the smaller the object which poverty gathers up, when it is grateful beyond all measure for it, as if the object were extraordinarily great, the greater it proves the poverty to be. Not even all the assurances about the greatest poverty prove this so conclusively; as if the poor man to whom you gave less than a shilling were to thank you for it as passionately as if you had given him wealth and superfluity; as passionately as if he were now rich. Alas, for it is only too certain that the poor man remained essentially as poor as before, so it was only his—crazed idea that he had now become rich. So poor is the poverty of love!

A noble man has said about love: "It takes everything and it gives everything." Who indeed received more than the one who received a man's love? And who gave more than he who gave a man his love? But, on the other hand, can even envy, when it enviously strips a man of his actual or supposed greatness, thus penetrate to the inmost under-garment! Oh, envy is still so stupid; it does not even suspect where the enclosure might be, or that this enclosure exists, where the really rich man has his true treasure hidden. It does not even suspect that there is a burglar-proof receptacle against thieves (hence, also

against envy), just as there is treasure which thieves (hence, also envy) are not able to steal. But love can press forward into the inmost enclosure and strip a man so that he has nothing left, owns nothing, so that he must himself admit that he has nothing, simply nothing, owns nothing. Wonderful! Envy takes, as it thinks, everything, and, when it has thus taken, the man says, "I have really lost nothing." But love can take everything, so that the man himself says, "I own nothing at all."

However, love is perhaps most correctly described as an infinite debt: so that when love seizes upon a man he feels that he is infinitely in debt. Generally we say about the one who is loved, that through being loved he becomes a debtor. Thus we say that children are in love indebted to their parents, because these have loved them first, so that the children's love is only a partial payment on the debt, or a repayment. And this of course is true. But still such a statement reminds one too much of an actual business relation: where an indebtedness has been incurred and must be paid off in installments. It is love which has been shown us, and it must be repaid with love. We are not now speaking of the fact that *by receiving one runs into debt.* No, he who loves is in debt; when he feels himself gripped by love, he feels this as being in an infinite debt. Wonderful! To give a man his love is, as was said, the highest thing one man can give another—and yet, just when he gives his love and just through giving it, he becomes infinitely indebted. Therefore can one say: *this is love's characteristic, that the lover by giving, infinitely, comes—into infinite debt.* But this is the relation of the infinite, and love is infinite. By giving away money one does not really run into debt; on the contrary, the receiver is in debt. On the contrary, when the lover gives what is infinitely the highest gift one man can give another, his love, then he places himself in an infinite debt. What a beautiful, what a sacred diffidence does not love bring with it; it not only dares not persuade itself to regard its own act as something meritorious, but it is ashamed even to regard its own act as a part payment on the debt; its own gift becomes consciously like an infinite debt which it is impossible to repay, since in giving, it is constantly running into debt.

Thus one might describe love. Yet Christianity never lingers on the condition or on the description of it; it always hastens to the task, or hastens to set the task. This is precisely expressed in the Gospel passage we read: "Owe no man anything except to love one another," which words we shall use as the basis for this meditation:

OUR DUTY TO REMAIN IN THE DEBT OF LOVE TO ONE ANOTHER.

To remain in debt! But should that be difficult? Nothing is easier than running into debt! And, on the other hand, could remaining in

debt be a task? We usually think otherwise, that our problem is the one of getting out of debt: the indebtedness may be anything, there are money debts, debts of honor, promissory notes, in short, anything whatever, the problem ordinarily always being how to get out of debt, the sooner the better. But here the task would be, and hence the honor, to remain in debt! And if this is the task, then it must be an action, perhaps an extensive, a difficult action. But to stay in debt is still precisely the expression for not undertaking the least thing; it is the expression for inactivity, indifference, sluggishness. And this same phrase, as used here, will be the expression for that which is precisely the opposite of indifference, the expression for infinite love.

Lo, all this, all these strange difficulties, which, as it were, heap themselves up against this strange saying, indicate that the matter may have a peculiar connection, so that a certain reorganization of mind and thought is needed in order merely to realize what the discourse is really about.

Let us begin with a little thought-experiment. If the lover, humanly speaking, had done something for the beloved so extraordinary, so exalted, so self-sacrificing, that men might say, "This is the greatest thing one man can do for another": then this would be beautiful and good. But suppose he were to add: "See, now I have paid my debt!" Would this not be ungracious, cold, and, strictly speaking, if I may venture, an indecency which ought never to be heard, and which never is heard in the good society of true love! If, on the other hand, the lover had done this high-minded and self-sacrificing thing, and now were to add: "I still have one prayer—oh, let me remain in your debt": would this not be graciously said! Or if the lover by means of every sacrifice indulges the wishes of the beloved, and now says, "It is a joy to me to pay off by this means a fragment of the indebtedness—in which, however, I still wish to continue": would this not be graciously said! Or if he simply kept silent about its involving sacrifice, merely to avoid the confusion it might produce, in that this sacrifice might for a moment seem like a partial payment on the debt: would this not be a gracious thought! If this is true, has it not really indicated that any business relation is inconceivable, is most abominable to love? Reckoning can only find a place where there is a finite relation, because the relation of finite to finite permits calculation. But love cannot calculate. If its left hand never gets to know what its right hand does, then it is impossible to cast up the accounts, and equally so when the debt is infinite. To reckon with an infinite greatness is impossible, for reckoning is exactly to make finite. The lover consequently wishes for his own sake to remain in debt; he does not wish exemption from any sacrifice, far from it. Willing, indescribably willing, as the prompting of love is, he

will do everything, and fear only one thing, that he might thus do everything so that he would get out of debt. Rightly understood, this is fear; the wish is to remain in debt, but it is also a duty, a task. If the love in us is not so perfect that we truly wish this, then duty will help us to remain in debt.

When it is a duty to remain in the debt of love to each other, then *must there be eternal vigilance, early and late, so that love never comes to dwell upon itself, or to compare itself with the love in other men, or to compare itself with its own deeds which it has performed.*

In the world we often hear enthusiastic and exciting speeches about love and faith and hope, and about the heart's goodness, in short, about all spiritual categories, speeches which describe and fascinate through their use of the most burning expressions, the most glowing colors. And yet such a discourse is really only a painted wall; it is to a closer and more serious inspection a deception, since it must either flatter the listener or make fun of him. Sometimes we hear a Christian discourse whose whole secret, like the narration and instruction noted, consists of this deceitful enthusiasm. If, for example, such a speech is heard, and a man now quite simply and honestly (for honesty precisely consists in wishing to act in accordance with what is said, in wishing to shape one's life accordingly) asks, "What shall I do, how shall I get love thus to inflame me?" then the speaker might answer literally, "That is a strange question; he who has love and faith and hope and goodness of heart, has these in the manner described, but he who does not have them cannot be helped by talking about them." Strange! One would, nevertheless, suppose that it would be of special importance to talk to those who are not this way—in order that they might become so. But here lies just the deception in the delusion: to speak as if one would guide men, and then to be obliged to confess that one can only speak *about* those who need no guidance, because those whom the speech addresses are already so perfect. But who is it then *to* whom one speaks, who will be benefited by this speech, which at most has some individual *about* whom it speaks—if it is otherwise true that such an individual exists?

But could such poetic nonsense also be Christianity? If so, it is a mistake on the part of primitive Christianity, that in the sermon about righteousness and purity, it constantly refers to publicans and sinners, who certainly are not righteous! Then should not Christianity, instead of speaking sarcastically about the righteous, who need no conversion, more correctly have embellished the speech into a eulogy upon—the righteous! But if this is done, then not only does Christianity have no one to speak *to*, but neither does it have anyone to speak *about*, that is, Christianity is silenced. No, Christianity has least of all announced itself as a eulogy, and it has never concerned itself with describing or

dwelling upon the fact of how a man is now; it has never made *distinctions* between men so it might only speak about those who *are* now so fortunate as to be lovable. Christianity begins at once with what *every* man *must become*. Therefore Christianity calls itself a guide, and rightly so; for no one will ask Christ, who is the Way, or the Scriptures, which are the guidance, in vain about what he ought to do: the questioner will get to know immediately—if he himself *wills* to know.

This in order to prevent misunderstanding. Anyone who does not wish to understand the discourse about what one must do in relation to love, in that there is truly much, or rather everything, to do both in acquiring and preserving it: he has placed himself outside of Christianity, he is a pagan who admires the lucky, hence the accidental, but just because of this he gropes in darkness—does it really become lighter, however many will-o'-the-wisps play around him?

Hence, there is something to do, and which must be done, in order to continue in the debt of love to each other. When a fisherman has caught a fish and wishes to keep it alive, what must he do? He must at once place it in water, otherwise it weakens and dies after a longer or shorter time. And why must he put it in water? Because water is the natural element of fish, and *everything which is to be kept alive must be kept in its own element*. But the natural element of love is infinity, inexhaustible, immeasurable. If, therefore, you wish to preserve your love, then you must take care that by the aid of infinite indebtedness, ensnared by liberty and life, it constantly remains in its element, otherwise it sickens and dies—not after a longer or shorter time, for it dies at once, which is exactly the sign of its perfection, that it can *only* live in infinity.

That love's natural element is infinity, inexhaustible, immeasurable, certainly no one will deny, and it is indeed easy to see. Assume, we can only assume it, that a serving-man or a man whose labor and trouble you can pay for, does exactly the same work for you as do your friends, so that there is consequently not the slightest discoverable difference between the result of their work and that of the servant: and yet, yet there is an infinite difference, an immeasurable difference. There is, namely, always in the one case something extra, which, strangely enough, is worth *infinitely* more than that to which it is added as an extra. This is exactly the concept, "immeasurable"! In everything which the friend does for you, in the least trifle as in the greatest sacrifice, he is constantly giving his love with it, and thereby the smallest service, which in connection with your servant you would hardly consider worth reckoning, becomes immeasurable.

Or imagine that a man conceived the idea of wishing to see whether he, without loving the other man yet because he wished to do it (hence,

for the sake of the experiment—not because it was his duty), could not be, as we say, equally indefatigable in sacrifices, in services, in expressions of devotion as the one who really loved the same man: you readily see that he does not approach this; there is, on the contrary, an incommensurable difference between the two. He who actually loves always has a headstart, and an infinite headstart; for by the time the other has unearthed, computed and discovered a new expression of devotion, the friend has already carried it out, because the friend does not need to calculate, and hence wastes no time in doing so.

But the fact of being and continuing in an infinite indebtedness, is exactly an expression for the infinity of love, so that by remaining in debt, love remains in its element. It is here a reciprocal relation, but infinite from both sides. In the one case it is the beloved who in each one of the lover's affectionate expressions of love grasps the incommensurability of the love; in the other case it is the lover who feels the incommensurability, because he knows the debt to be infinite: it is one and the same thing which is infinitely great and infinitely small. The object of love confesses in love that the lover in the smallest things does infinitely more than all others through all the greatest sacrifices; and the lover confesses that even with all possible sacrifices he does infinitely less than he feels the debt to be. What a wonderful like for like in this infinity! Oh, the scholars are proud of their calculation of the infinite, but here is the philosopher's stone: the least expression of love is infinitely greater than all sacrifices, and all sacrifices are infinitely less than the least expression of love in reducing the debt!

But what, then, can take love out of its element? *As soon as love becomes self-centered, it is out of its natural element.* What does it mean to be self-centered? It means to become itself the object. But an *object* is always a dangerous matter if one wishes to move forward; an *object* is like a finitely fixed point, a boundary and a hindrance, a dangerous matter for the infinite. *Infinitely* it cannot be that love itself becomes the object, nor is there danger therein. For *infinitely* to be itself its own object is to remain in the infinite, and insofar only to exist or to continue to exist, since love is a reduplication in itself, as different as the particularity of the natural life is from the spiritual reduplication. Hence, *when love becomes self-centered,* it must be in its own individual expression that it becomes itself the object, or that another distinct love becomes the object, the love in the one man, and the love in the other man. When the object is thus finite, love becomes self-centered; for *infinitely to become self-centered* is exactly to be in movement. But when love is finitely self-centered, everything is lost. Imagine an arrow that flies, as we say, with the speed of an arrow; imagine that for a moment it gets the idea of halting its flight, perhaps in order to see how

far it has come or how high it has soared above the earth, or how its speed compared with that of another arrow, which also flew with the speed of an arrow: at that very moment, it falls to the ground.

So too with love when it becomes *finitely* self-centered, or becomes itself the object, which more exactly defined, is *comparison*. Love cannot *infinitely* compare itself with itself, for infinitely it so resembles itself that this would be merely saying that it is itself. There is in the *infinite* comparison no third party, that is a reduplication, hence there is no comparison. The third party belongs to all comparison, together with likeness and unlikeness. If there is no dwelling on itself, there is no comparison; if there is no comparison, there is no dwelling on itself.

But what then can the third party of the comparison be? The love in the individual man can compare itself with the love in others. Then he discovers, or thinks that he discovers, that his love is greater than that in the others, or that in certain others it is greater, but in others less. Perhaps at first he believed that the comparison was but a fleeting side-glance in passing, something which required neither time nor effort. Alas! the side-glance of comparison discovers only too easily a whole world of relationships and calculations. This causes a stoppage; at that very moment he is prepared to get out of debt, or is perhaps already out of debt—that is, out of love. Or the third party of the comparison may be those hitherto unaccomplished works of love. At the very moment when reckoning and weighing he is prepared to get out of debt, or perhaps with great self-satisfaction, he sees himself already more than out of debt—he is more than out of love.

In the comparison everything is lost, love is made finite, the debt is to be paid—quite like every other debt; in contradistinction to the debt of honor which is peculiar in that it must be paid at once, the sooner the better, the debt of love is peculiar in being infinite. What does comparison always lose? It loses the moment, the moment which should be filled with an expression of the life of love. But *to lose the moment is to become immediate*. A moment lost, then is the chain of eternity broken; a moment lost, then is the continuity of eternity disturbed; a moment lost, then is the eternal lost; but to lose the eternal is precisely to become immediate. A moment wasted on comparison, then is everything forfeited. The moment of comparison is, namely, a selfish moment, a moment which wishes to be *for itself*; just this is the breach, the fall—as the fall of the arrow is due to dwelling on itself.

In comparison, everything is lost, love made finite, the debt to pay, position of no consequence, even if it were the highest; love thinks to participate *comparatively* in proportion to the love of others, or in proportion to its own special impulses. Let us understand each other.

If it were really true, we may for a moment assume this, that it were considered unbecoming and unseemly for the king's son to associate with common men—if he nevertheless did this, and now in his own defense said, "I am by no means surrendering my dignity, I shall certainly know how to assert myself as the first among all these men": I wonder if the subtle courtier would not say: "Your Highness, you do not understand; the unseemliness lies in the fact of your associating with such men. Your Highness will himself realize that it would sound like mockery for it to be said about you, the Prince, that you are the highest among those common men. In that comparison there is nothing for you to gain, practically nothing, by being first among them; for the relation itself, the possibility of comparison is a *faux pas*, and to remain outside of the possibility of comparison is the only thing worthy of the royal dignity." Still this is nothing but a jest. But when that which is and ought to be infinite seeks the evil companionship of intercourse and comparison with the finite, then this is unseemly, undignified; then is the debasement deserved, even if within the comparison one thinks to be the first. For even if it looked and were true, *comparatively* to love better than all other men, is not to love. To love is to remain in infinite indebtedness, the infinity of the debt is the bond of perfection.

Let me elucidate this by speaking about another infinite relationship. Imagine an enthusiast who enthusiastically desires only one thing, and who will enthusiastically sacrifice everything for that one good. Imagine that it now happens (that which does not happen *accidentally*, but which will absolutely happen as long as the world is the world) that to the degree he labors more and more disinterestedly, more and more sacrificingly, more and more strenuously, to that same degree the world works more and more against him; imagine him to have reached the point—where if for a single moment he makes a mistake and compares his effort with the reward which the world gives; or makes a mistake and compares his effort with his hitherto unrealized ambition; or makes a mistake and compares his lot with that of those distinguished ones who do not seem to be fired by enthusiasm: alas! then is he lost. Now the Tempter enters and says to him: "Halt your striving, lessen your exertions, have a good time, enjoy life in comfort and accept the flattering condition which is offered you of being known as one of the greatest enthusiasts"—for the Tempter does not speak ill of enthusiasm, he is too clever for that; nor does he fool men so easily into dropping the matter. However, if the enthusiast will not yield to the Tempter, he renews his efforts. Then again the Tempter comes to him and says: "Halt your labors, lessen your exertions, have a good time, enjoy life in comfort by accepting the most unconditionally flattering terms that can certainly ever be offered you, the being recognized as the world's great-

est enthusiast, a recognition which will make your life easier and secure for you, the enthusiast, the admiration of the world, whereas you are now only making your life strenuous and arousing the opposition of the world." Alas, to be *comparatively* enthusiastic is not to be enthusiastic at all.

Woe to the man who has corrupted his soul by the defilement of comparison, for he cannot understand his neighbor except as tremendous pride and vanity. For the enthusiast says to the Tempter: "Be off, and take your comparisons with you." And this is exactly the right procedure. Therefore we urge upon an enthusiast: "Shut your eyes, close your ears, stick to the demand of the infinite; then no comparison will slink in to assassinate your enthusiasm, and to tempt you to become the greatest enthusiast—comparatively! In the sight of the infinite demand your greatest efforts are but a childish performance, and this fact should prevent your becoming self-important, since you will just begin to understand how infinitely much more is required of you."

We warn the one on a ship which is sailing ahead before the wind, not to look at the waves lest he should become giddy; in the same way the comparison between the finite and the infinite makes a man giddy. Guard yourself, therefore, against the comparison which the world wishes to force upon you; for the world understands no more about enthusiasm than a capitalist does about love, and you will always find that dullness and stupidity are first of all intent on making comparisons, and in catching everything in the muddy "actuality" of comparison. Therefore do not look about you, "salute no man on the way," listen to no cry or shout which wishes to dupe you out of your enthusiasm and trick it into spending its strength laboring in the treadmill of comparison. Let it not disturb you if the world calls your enthusiasm madness, calls it selfishness—in eternity everyone will be forced to understand what enthusiasm and love are. Do not accept the terms offered you: the admiration of the whole world in exchange for half the labor. Continue in the debt of the infinite, happy in its terms: the opposition of the whole world because you will not bargain. Do not listen, for then it is already too late—to disbelieve it. On the other hand, do not listen to what is lyingly said about enthusiasm, lest you be injured in another way, by believing it, as if every man who *wills it* is not equally near to the infinite, and hence equally near to becoming enthusiastic. For what is enthusiasm? Is it not merely being willing to do and suffer everything? Is it not also wishing always to remain in the debt of the infinite? For every time the arrow will speed forth, the bowstring must be tensed, but for every time the enthusiasm renews or in the renewal maintains its impetus, the infinitude of the debt must be kept in mind.

So too with love. If you wish to preserve love, then you must preserve it in the infinite debt. Guard yourself, therefore, against comparisons! One who watches over the most precious treasure in the world does not need to exercise so much caution to prevent anyone from learning to know about it; for you must also be on guard so that you yourself do not learn to know something about love through comparisons. Guard against comparison! Comparison affords the most fatal connection into which love can enter. Comparison is the most dangerous acquaintance love can establish. Comparison is the worst of all seducers. And no seducer is so swiftly at hand, and no seducer is so everywhere present as is the comparison as soon as your side-glance beckons—however, let no one seduced say in his own defense, "The comparison seduced me," for he was the one who discovered the comparison. We all know how timidly, how ineffectively, and with how much difficulty a man walks when he knows he is walking on smooth ice; but we know, too, that if because of darkness or for some other reason he does not know that he is walking on it, then he steps forth quite firmly and confidently. Be on guard therefore against the comparison! Comparison is the adventitious sucker on the root which takes the strength from the tree: as if cursed the tree becomes a withered shadow, but the adventitious sucker flourishes in its unwholesome growth. Comparison may be likened to your neighbor's marshy ground; even if your house is not built on it, all the surrounding ground also sinks. Comparison is like the hidden worm of secret consumption which does not die, at least not until it has taken the life of love. Comparison is a loathsome skin-eruption which strikes inward and consumes the marrow. Be vigilant, therefore, in your love against the comparison.

But if the comparison is the only thing which could get love out of debt, or which is ready to get it out of debt, and the comparison is avoided, then the love remains, sound and vital—in the infinite debt. Remaining in debt is an infinitely artful and yet infinitely satisfying expression for the infinitude of love. When one says about a force of nature, for instance, that it is blowing a gale, or that it bursts forth with an infinite power and force, there is always the possibility that it may cease or become exhausted. But that which infinitely in itself has also an infinite debt behind it, is a second time made infinite; it has in itself the vigilance which always takes care that it does not cease—the debt is the second time the accelerating force.

When it is a duty to remain in the indebtedness of love to one another, *then the remaining in debt is not merely an enthusiastic expression, not a mere concept of love, but it is action; then the love remains, by the aid of duty, Christian love in action, in the haste of action, and just thereby in the infinite debt.*

To love is to assume an infinite debt. The wish to remain in debt might seem to be only an interpretation of a concept of love, a last and most extreme expression which is incident to it—like the garlands at a festival. For even the most precious goblet filled with the choicest wine still lacks something: that the goblet be garlanded! And even the most lovable soul in the form of the most lovely woman—still lacks something: the bridal garland which perfects her! So it must also be said, when one talks merely humanly about love: this wish to remain in debt is the highest festal expression, it is the garland at the festival, something which in a certain sense makes no difference (for one certainly does not drink the enwreathed goblet, nor do the garlands become a part of the bride), and just for that reason it is the expression of the beautiful enthusiasm. Only in the human sense is a beautiful enthusiasm the highest.

But Christianity does not speak enthusiastically about love; it says it is a duty to remain in the debt of love, and it says this not as a giddy thought now for the last time and as the result of intoxication—for the wish to continue in debt would be an exaggerated expression, and yet it might possibly seem to become more exaggerated through being regarded as a duty. Even the exaggeration has, against its will, an appearance of paying off on the debt, but if it is a duty to remain in debt, then the impossibility soars even higher. It might seem like a case of intoxication, where a sudden moment of sobriety means an increase of intoxication; for enthusiasm becomes even more enthusiastic when it is expressed quietly and coolly; the marvelous becomes even more marvelous when it is described quite simply, as an ordinary event. But Christianity does not speak in this way. It speaks about remaining in debt in quite the same fervent way that a noble human love speaks about it, but it says it quite differently. Christianity simply makes no fuss over it; it is not, like the purely human interpretation of love, overwhelmed by the sight; no, it speaks equally as earnestly about it as about that which seems to a merely human enthusiasm entirely unlike it. It says it is a duty, and thereby it takes away from love everything inflaming, everything immediate, everything giddy.

Christianity says it is a duty to remain in debt, and means thereby that it *involves action, not a mere expression about love*, not a reflective *interpretation* of love. In the Christian sense no human being has ever accomplished the highest in love; and even if it were possible, this impossibility, there would at that very moment, from the Christian standpoint, be a new task. But if there is immediately a new task, then it is impossible to have time to know whether one has achieved the highest or not; for at the moment when one would get to know it, he is engaged in accomplishing the new task, and hence is prevented from

knowing anything about the preceding moment, for which he has no time; he is occupied with the *haste of action*, whereas even in the moment of the greatest enthusiasm there is a certain lingering.

Christianity understands what action means, and how incessantly action is able to occupy love. The merely human interpretation of love admires love, and that is why it so easily comes to a standstill, a moment where there is nothing to do, an idle moment, that is the moment of enthusiasm. Love is to the merely human understanding as the extraordinarily gifted child is to the simple parents: the child finishes his task so quickly that the parents are at a loss to know what they can find to keep him busy. Love is to the merely human understanding of the conception, like the fiery snorting steed which quickly rides the horseman tired, instead of the horseman being able, if necessary, to ride his steed tired. And Christianity can do this. Its purpose is not to work love tired, far from it; but Christianity knows, by virtue of its eternal nature and by the earnestness of eternity, that it can master love, and therefore it speaks so simply, so earnestly, about the matter—just as the skilled horseman who knows that he can manage his horse, is not surprised at its mettle, for he says it ought to be mettlesome; and he does not destroy its spirit, but by training it he improves the horse. So Christianity knows how to constrain love, and to teach it that at every moment there is a task; it knows how to bear with love so that love may humbly learn that wishing to remain in debt is not a mere form of words, not merely enthusiasm, but that it is earnestness and truth.

The danger would be, as certainly happened, that love would come to dwell comparatively upon itself. This must be prevented, but when it is prevented by the *aid of duty*, something else also happens—love comes into a relation with the Christian concept, or in the *Christian* sense with the God-idea. This debt-relation is carried over into the relation between man and God. It is God who, so to speak, kindly takes charge of the demand of love; by loving a man the lover comes into an infinite debt—but also a debt to God as guardian of the beloved. Now comparison becomes impossible, and now love has found its master.

There is no more talk about festal moods and showy achievements; love will no longer, if I may speak thus, play on the childish stage of men, which leaves it doubtful whether it is jest or earnest. While love in all its own expressions turns outward toward men, where it has its object and its tasks, it still knows that this is not the place where it shall be judged, but that in its innermost being, where love lays hold on God, there is the judgment. It is as when a child is out among strangers, it behaves as it has been taught. But whether strangers think well of the child or not, whether it occurs to the child that it behaves better than the other children or not: the seriously trained child never

loses sight of the fact that the decision will be made at home, where the parents do the judging. And yet the training is not planned for fitting the child to remain at home with its parents; on the contrary, it is planned to fit the child to go out into the world. So too with love when it is understood in the Christian way. It is, so to speak, God who trains the love in a man; but God does not do this just for His own pleasure, just to delight Himself with the sight. On the contrary, He does it in order then to send love out into the world, perpetually busy with its task. Nevertheless, the earnestly trained, the Christian love never for a moment forgets where it shall be judged; at evening, or morning, or whenever it may be, in short every time it temporarily leaves all its tasks in order to come home, it is catechized—in order to be immediately sent out again. For even with the greatest enthusiasm love may still tarry a little before it goes out again, but with God there is no tarrying.

Thus understood, earnestness and truth consist in remaining in the debt of love to each other. Even the most sincerely intended and, humanly speaking, the noblest enthusiasm, even the most fervent and disinterested enthusiasm, is still not earnestness, even though it accomplishes astonishing things, and even if it also wishes to remain in debt. The deficiency in even the noblest human enthusiasm is that it, as merely human, in the final analysis *is not itself powerful, because it has no higher power over it.* Only the God-relationship is earnest; the earnestness consists in forcing the task to its highest achievement because there is One who compels by the power of the eternal; the earnestness consists in the enthusiasm having power over itself and compulsion in itself. The individual is bound by his debt of love to other men; but it is neither the individual himself nor the other men who shall judge his love. If this is true, then must the individual remain in the infinite indebtedness. God has the infinite conception of truth and of the infallibility of love. God is love, hence the individual must remain in debt—as God judges him, or as he abides in God, for only in the infinitude of debt can God abide in him.

He is in debt, and he also recognizes that it is his duty to remain in debt, his duty to admit this, which from the Christian standpoint is not the admission of a fanatic, but of a humble, loving soul. The humility consists in making the confession; the loving, as it were, consists in being infinitely willing to make it because it belongs to love, because there is the meaning and coherence of eternal happiness in this confession; the Christian meaning consists in simply not ceasing to do this, because it is his duty.

"Therefore owe no man anything except to love one another"; no,

"pay everyone everything which you owe them; tribute to whom tribute is due; duty to whom duty, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor." In this way owe no man anything, not what you have borrowed from him, not what you have promised him, not what he might rightly demand of you in repayment. If possible, owe no man anything, no favors, no service, no sympathy in joy or sorrow, no forbearance of judgment, no assistance in life, no advice in danger, no sacrifice, not even the hardest—no, in all these, owe no man anything; but still remain in debt, which with all this you have by no means desired, and which before God you have by no means been able to pay, the debt of loving one another!

Oh, do this! And then only one thing more: "Remember in time that if you do this, or if you try to comply with this, then will things go ill for you in the world." This is especially important to keep in mind with a particular reference to the conclusion of this discourse, and with a general reference to the conclusion of this little book, so that the discourse may not fascinate you with untruth. Therefore the world will simply find the conclusion entirely wrong, which fact again has significance in proving that the conclusion is—right.

We read and sometimes hear with sadness a Christian discourse which really leaves out the final danger. What is said about faith and love and humility is entirely right and wholly Christian; but nevertheless such a discourse may mislead a youth, instead of guiding him, because it neglects to tell him what happens to the Christian in the world. The discourse demands that a man shall work self-sacrificingly to develop his Christian nature—but then, yes then, there is no more said, or the supremely serious, more definite categories are suppressed, while such assertions are made that the good has its reward, that the good is loved both by God and man. If this Christian nature is rightly recommended as the highest, then the youth must surely believe that if he accomplishes the required task, or at least works honestly to accomplish it, then things will go well for him in the world. Oh, but this silence about the final difficulty (that, humanly speaking, it will go badly with him in the world, and so much more so as he develops his Christian character) is a deception, which may either lead the youth to self-despair (as if the fault lay squarely in himself, because he was not a true Christian) or to his despondently giving up his struggle, as if something quite unusual had happened to him, while nevertheless he had only experienced the ordinary consequence which the apostle John refers to when he says: "Marvel not at this." Consequently, the speaker has deceived the youth by keeping silent about the true sequence of events, as if, from the Christian standpoint, there were a conflict only in

one place, instead of the true Christian struggle always being a twofold danger because there is a conflict in two places: first, in the inner man, where he must fight with himself, and then, when he has made progress in this conflict, outside of himself, where he must fight with the world. Alas, perhaps such a speaker is afraid to recommend the Christian and the good in this certainly strange but veracious way, by saying that it has no reward in the world, and that, moreover, the world always works against it. Perhaps it may seem to the speaker like smiting himself on his own—eloquent lips, if, after having recommended the good in the most laudatory and particularly fortunately chosen turns and expressions, and after having almost brought the listener to go out even this very day and act in accordance with his teaching, it may perhaps seem to him like smiting himself upon the lips, moreover, it would really be a sin, considering the impression produced by his inspired eloquence, if among his recommendations he should now interject this statement: that the good is rewarded with hate, contempt, and persecution. For, if this is true, would it not be more natural to warn against the good? To put it even more exactly, one does just this by recommending it in this way. The speaker is certainly in a difficult position. Well-intentioned perhaps, he really wishes to attract men: so he omits the final difficulty, the one which makes the recommendation so difficult —and then the discourse flows on, elevating and tear-compelling in its polished delivery. Ah, but this, as everyone knows, is deception. If, on the contrary, the speaker makes use of—the difficult recommendation, then he "frightens his audience away," perhaps the speech almost frightens himself. He, who is so highly popular, honored and appreciated, certainly proves that the good Christian has his reward in the world. He has, namely, his reward, even if eternity believes ten times over that he has lost it. It cannot be denied that he has a reward, but a somewhat worldly one, and it is not the compensation which Christianity *at the time* had promised its adherents, and by which it had *directly* recommended itself.

We should truly hate to make a youth conceited, and early teach him to form the habit of judging the world; God forbid that any word of ours should be able to contribute to the development of such unsoundness in a man. We believe in making his inner life so strenuous that from the very beginning he learns to think otherwise; for it is certainly a perverted hatred of the world which, possibly without even having once considered the tremendous responsibility involved, wishes to be persecuted. But, on the other hand, we should truly hate to deceive a youth by keeping silent about the difficulty and keeping silent at the very moment when we are trying to recommend the Christian way of life, for then and just then is the time to speak. Confidently and fear-

lessly we dare to recommend the Christian way of life, and to add that its reward, to put it mildly, will be the ingratitude of the world. We regard it as our duty to say this *in time*, so that we may not sometimes recommend Christianity by omitting any of its essential difficulties, and at other times, perhaps because of some particular text, find some ground of comfort for it in the life attempted. No, just at the time when the Christian way is being most strongly recommended, the difficulty must be simultaneously emphasized. It is unchristian sophistry if anyone reasons in this way: "Let us use every means to win men to the Christian way of life, and then when sometime adversities come upon them, then we shall have the remedy, then will be the time to speak about it." But this is the deception: that it might be possible for a Christian to escape these adversities, just as some people are fortunate in not being tried by poverty or sickness. That is, it places the opposition of the world in an accidental relation to the Christian way, not in an essential relation: opposition may perhaps come, but then again it may not. However, such a consideration is absolutely unchristian. If a pagan may rightly deem himself fortunate at his death because he was through with life and past all adversities, well, that is possible; but a Christian ought to be a little doubtful in this joy at the moment of death—for from the Christian standpoint, the opposition of the world has an *essential* relation to Christian inwardness. Besides, in the very moment of choosing Christianity, one should have an impression of its difficulties, so that he may know what it is he is choosing. Nothing should be promised the youth except what Christianity can hold to, but Christianity cannot hold to anything other than what it has promised from the beginning: the world's ingratitude, opposition, insults, and always increasingly so, the more earnestly Christian one becomes. This is the final difficulty in the Christian way of life, and least of all must there be silence about it when one is recommending Christianity.

No, if there is to be silence regarding the final difficulty, then there is really nothing to be said about the Christian way of life. If the world is not as Christianity originally assumed it to be, then is Christianity essentially abolished. That which Christianity calls self-denial simply and essentially implies a *double danger*, otherwise the self-denial is not Christian self-denial. Therefore, if anyone can show that the world or Christendom have now become essentially good, as if they were the eternal, then I can also show that the Christian self-denial is made impossible and Christianity abolished, just as it will be abolished in eternity, where it will cease to be a *striving*.

A *merely human self-denial* thinks as follows: give up your selfish wishes, desires and plans—then you will be honored and respected and loved as just and wise. It is easy to see that this sort of self-denial

does not lay hold of God or the God-relationship, but remains on the worldly plane of a relationship between men. The *Christian self-denial thinks*: give up your selfish wishes and desires, give up your selfish plans and purposes in order to work for the good in true disinterestedness—and then prepare to find yourself, just on that account, hated, scorned and mocked, and even executed as a criminal; or rather, do not prepare to find yourself in this situation, for that may become necessary, but choose it of your own free will. For Christian self-denial knows beforehand that these things will happen, and chooses them freely. Christianity has the eternal understanding of what it costs to give up its own selfish purposes; therefore it does not let the Christian go for half-price. One can readily see that the Christian self-denial lays hold on God, and in God has its only stronghold. But only thus is Christian self-denial to be relied upon—*in* the double danger. The other danger, or the danger in another place, is precisely the guarantee that the self-denial has the right God-relationship, that it is purely a God-relationship. And if there were no other double danger except that of wishing thus to be relied upon, the world regards as stupidity or folly that which it is very far from honoring and admiring. The world understands self-denial only as shrewdness, and therefore honors only the self-denial which shrewdly remains within the compass of the worldly. Therefore the worldly always sees to it that there shall be an adequate number of the counterfeit notes of the false self-denial in circulation; alas! and sometimes the crossing of the ratios and thoughts becomes so complicated that it needs an expert eye immediately to detect the counterfeit notes. For one can also take God along secularly into worldliness, and hence get a self-denial which bears the God-mark and yet is a forgery. Secularly it may sometimes look as if it is called to deny itself for the sake of God, yet not in that reliable confidence in God of the double danger, but in such a way that worldliness understands that man and honors him accordingly. Yet *it is easy* to recognize the forgery, for as soon as the double mark is lacking, then the self-denial is not the Christian self-denial.

It is human self-denial when a child denies himself while the arms of the parents encouragingly and promptly open to it. It is human self-denial if a man denies himself, and the world now opens its arms to him. But it is Christian self-denial if a man denies himself, and then, just because the world for that reason closes its arms to him, repulsed by the world he now must seek confidence in God. The twofold danger lies in the fact that he met opposition just where he had expected to find help, and consequently he must turn twice, instead of as in human self-denial turning but once. No self-denial, therefore, which is encouraged by the world, is Christian self-denial. This was the

meaning of the early Church Fathers when they said that all the virtues of the heathen were shining vices. It *is merely human self-denial*: without fear for one's self or for the consequences, to rush into danger—into a danger where honor awaits the victor, where the admiration of the environment, of the spectators, allures the one who only dares. It is easy to see that this self-denial does not lay hold on God, but is delayed by human relativities. *Christian self-denial* rushes into danger without fear of the consequences to itself, into a danger which the environment cannot understand will bring any honor to the victor, because the environment is itself blinded, entangled and guilty. Consequently, it is not only perilous to rush into the danger, but there is here a double danger because the contempt of the spectators awaits the hero, whether he wins or loses.

In the one instance the idea of danger is conceded; the environment is agreed that there is danger, danger in venturing, and hence honor to gain by victory, since the conception of the danger has made his contemporaries ready to applaud the one who dares. In the second case the hero must himself discover the danger and strive to get the right to call it danger, which his contemporaries are not willing to do, who, although they admit that it is possible to lose one's life in this danger, yet deny that it is really danger, since from their point of view it is ridiculous, and hence it is doubly ridiculous to lose one's life for the sake of something ridiculous. Thus Christianity discovered a danger which is called everlasting perdition. The world found this danger ridiculous. Let us now imagine a Christian witness. For the sake of this doctrine he rushes into a struggle with the powerful who hold his life in their hands, and who must look upon him as an agitator—a fact which will cost him his life. At the same time his contemporaries, with whom he has no immediate quarrel, but who are spectators, find it ridiculous that anyone should risk death for such foolishness. Here is life to lose and truly no honor or admiration to gain! Still, thus to be forsaken, only thus to be forsaken, is Christian self-denial.— —If now the world, or Christendom, had been essentially good, then this self-denial would have been impossible; for under such conditions the world, as essentially good, would honor and praise the one who denied himself and who always had the true conception of where the danger was and what it truly was.

Therefore we wish to end this discourse like all our discourses which, according to the ability vouchsafed us, recommend the godly life, with this little ingratiating word of exhortation: watch yourself at the beginning of your task—lest you find that you are not truly in earnest in truly wishing to deny yourself. Our understanding of what Christianity is, is too serious to wish to entice anyone; we would almost rather warn

against it. He who in truth will appropriate the Christian teaching, he will yet come to experience inward terrors quite different from the bit of terror dramatically set forth in a discourse; he must make an outward resolution quite different from one he could make by the aid of the painted falsity of a bit of eloquence. We leave it to anyone to decide whether this, our earnest understanding of what Christianity means, could seem cold, cheerless and lacking in enthusiasm.

So far as one might speak of his own personal relation to the world, since this would be a different matter, it would be one's duty to speak as mildly, as apologetically as possible, and even if one does speak, it is his duty to remain in the debt of love. But when we speak instructively we dare not keep silent, a fact that is little calculated to win favor for the discourse in the longing understanding of an enthusiastic youth. Nor dare we recommend, smilingly to wish to elevate himself above the world's opposition and folly; if this could be done as it is done in heathendom, it can only be done in heathendom, because the heathen does not have the true Christian's earnest, eternally concerned conception of the truth: yet to the truth it is by no means ridiculous that others do not have it. From the Christian point of view the world's essential foolishness is not at all ridiculous, however ridiculous it is; for when there is an eternal happiness to win or lose, then it is neither a jest if I win it, nor laughable if someone loses it.

On the other hand, it would be an absurdity we should guard against, to speak complacently about the Christian truth. If a man were handing another man a terribly sharp, polished two-edged tool, would he hand it to him with the manner, bearing and gestures with which he would hand him a bouquet of flowers? Would not this be a crazy thing to do? How does one do it? If he is certain of the dangerous nature of the tool, while he may recommend it unhesitatingly, he also adds a word of caution. And so with the Christian truth. If necessary we should not hesitate, conscious of the greatest responsibility, in our *Christian* preaching, precisely in our *Christian* preaching, to preach *against* Christianity. For we know perfectly well in these times how anything unpleasant stings: so that the preacher by foolish and flattering sermons has tricked Christianity into becoming an illusion and us men into imagining that as such we are Christians. Still, if a man had thought that he was holding a flower in his hand, a flower which he half foolishly, half thoughtlessly has enjoyed looking at, and then some one, with truth, remember, cried to him, "You fool, do you not see that you are holding a terribly sharp, polished, two-edged tool!"—would he not for a moment be horrified? But, but—did the one who truthfully said that, deceive him or the truth? Therefore, if someone were to call that man's attention to the fact that the flower he held in his hand was no common, ordinary flower,

but a very rare one, this would again be to confirm him more strongly in his misunderstanding. No, Christianity is not from the human point of view the extremely rare blossom, nor is it the rarest of all—so the sermon becomes pagan and worldly within the limitations of the merely human understanding. Divinely understood, Christianity is the highest good, and therefore also, humanly understood, a tremendously dangerous good, because when only humanly understood, it is so far from being the rare flower that it is offense and foolishness, now as once in the beginning, and as long as the world stands.

Wherever the Christian religion is, there is the possibility of offense, but offense is the supreme danger. Everyone who has in truth appropriated the Christian teaching, or something of it, has been obliged thus to pass by the possibility of offense so that he has seen it, and with it before his eyes—has chosen the Christian way. If Christianity is to be discussed, the discourse must constantly hold the possibility of offense open, but hence it can never bring itself to recommend Christianity *immediately*, so the difference between the speakers would merely be that one used a stronger, a second a weaker, a third the strongest possible expression of praise. Christianity can only be recommended if at every point the possibility of the danger is constantly made manifest: that to the merely human understanding the Christian way is foolishness and offense. But by making this clear and explicit, the warning is given. So earnest is Christianity. Whatever stands in need of men's applause immediately tries to curry favor with them; but Christianity is so certain of itself, and recognizes with such earnestness and severity that it is men who need it, that just for that reason it does not recommend itself directly, but first startles them—just as Christ early commended Himself to His disciples by predicting to them that they would be hated for His sake; that the one who smote them would think that he was doing God service.

When Christianity came into the world it was not necessary for it to call attention to the fact (although it did so) that it would be a source of offense, for the world which was offended, discovered this soon enough. But now, now since the world has become Christian, now must Christianity first of all look out for offense. If it is therefore true that so many "Christians" in these times are disappointed in Christianity, how does this happen except because the possibility of offense escapes them, this frightfulness, please notice! What wonder, then, that Christianity and its eternal happiness and its duties are no longer able to satisfy the "Christians"—they cannot even be offended by them!

When Christianity came into the world it was not necessary even for it to call attention to the fact that it was contrary to human reason (although it did so), for the world discovered this readily enough. But

now, now, since Christianity has lived through hundreds of years in the complex intercourse with the human reason; now, since a fallen Christianity, like those fallen angels who married earthly women—has entered into a marriage with the human reason; now, since Christianity and reason have become on "*du*" terms: now Christianity must ever be on the watch for offense. If Christianity (alas! this sounds like the fairy story about the palace under enchantment for a hundred years) is to be preached out of the enchantment and the deformed metamorphosis of delusion, then must first the possibility of offense again be revived as the basis of preaching. Only the possibility of offense (the antidote against the sleeping potion of apologetics) is able to wake the slumberer, able to overcome the enchantment, so that Christianity may again be itself.

If then the Holy Scriptures say, "Woe to the one by whom the offense cometh," then we can confidently say, "Woe to the one who first hit upon the idea of preaching Christianity without the possibility of offense." Woe to the one who in ingratiating, amorous, attractive, convincing words foisted off something unworthy of men as Christianity! Woe to the one who would make a miracle comprehensible, or at least suggest that there were clear probabilities of soon being able to do so! Woe to the one who betrayed and broke the secret of faith, corrupted it into a popular wisdom by taking the possibility of offense away! Woe to the one who would lay hold on the secret of the atonement without perceiving the possibility of offense, and again, woe to him because he thought thereby to make God and Christianity into an esthetic coterie! Woe to all those faithless stewards who sat down and falsified their records, and thereby gained friends for Christianity and themselves by writing off the possibility of offense in Christianity, and imputed to it a hundred kinds of foolishness! Oh, what a sorry waste of ability and shrewdness! Oh, what an appalling waste of time spent on the tremendous task of defending Christianity! Truly, when Christianity again arises in its power through the possibility of offense, then will this horror again scare men up: then will Christianity need no defense.

And, on the other hand, the more scholarly, the more excellent the *defense* is, the more is Christianity corrupted, done away with, shrunken like a half-man. For the defense wishes out of the goodness of its heart, to take the possibility of offense away. But Christianity will not be defended; rather it is men who should look to it to learn whether they are able to defend themselves and defend for themselves that which they choose, when Christianity sometime terribly offers them the choice, and terribly forces them to choose: either to be offended or to accept Christianity. Therefore, take away from Christianity the possibility of

offense, or else take away from the forgiveness of sins the anxious debate of conscience (to which still, according to Luther's excellent explanation, this whole matter must be referred), and then lock the churches, the sooner the better, or make them into recreation centers which stand open all day.

But while the whole world has been made Christian through the taking away the possibility of offense: the strange circumstance constantly manifests itself: that the world is offended at the real Christian. Here the offense enters, if the possibility of offense is still inseparable from the Christian belief. Only the confusion becomes worse than ever; for if once the world was offended at Christianity—there was meaning in that; but now the world has the illusion that it is Christian, that it has appropriated Christianity, without paying any attention to the possibility of offense—and so it is offended at the real Christian. Truly, escape from such a delusion is difficult. Woe to the swift pens and busy tongues, woe to all the busyness which because it *neither* knows the one *nor* the other, therefore finds it so infinitely easy to reconcile *both* the one *and* the other!

The Christian world is always offended by the true Christian. Only now the passion of offense is not ordinarily so strong that it wishes to eradicate him; no, it will only continue to mock and insult him. This is easy to explain. At the time when the world was itself conscious of not being Christian, then there was something to fight about, then it was a fight to the death. But now, when the world is proudly and calmly certain that it is Christian, the true Christian insistence is merely something to laugh at. The confusion is even more distressing than in the first period of Christianity. That was distressing, but there was meaning in it, since the world was fighting to the death against Christianity. But the world's present lofty calmness in its consciousness of being Christian, its cheap bit of mockery, if one wishes to call it that—of the real Christian: this almost borders on madness. For never in its first period was Christianity thus made the object of ridicule.

If then in this Christian world a man's only desire is to fight to perfect his duty in remaining in the debt of love to everyone: then he will be swept out into the last difficulty, and will have the opposition of the world to fight against. Alas, the world seldom or never thinks of God; that is the reason why it completely misunderstands every life whose most essential and steadfast thought is precisely the thought of God, the thought about where, divinely understood, the danger is, and what is required of a man! Therefore the Christian world is apt to say about the true Christian in this respect: "See how he gives himself up; even there where he is manifestly the injured party, it is almost as if he were the one who begs for forgiveness." The world will in him—Chris-

tianly (for the world is indeed Christian) feel the lack of the requisite—Christian hard-heartedness, which busies itself with asserting its right to assert itself, to repay evil with evil, or at least busies itself with the proud consciousness of doing good.

The world simply does not notice that such a man has a totally different standard for his life, and that this explains the whole procedure quite simply, while, explained according to the world's standard, it becomes quite meaningless. But since the world does not realize and does not wish to realize that this standard, the God-relationship, exists, hence it cannot explain such a man's conduct as anything except a peculiarity—for the fact that it is Christian conduct naturally cannot occur to the world, which as Christian certainly best knows what Christianity is. It is odd for a man not to be self-seeking; it is odd that he does not quarrel; it is odd and foolish in him to forgive his enemy, and to be almost afraid that he does not do enough for his enemy; it is odd that he always sticks at the wrong place, never where it appears to his advantage to be courageous, high-minded and disinterested: this is odd, far-fetched and stupid, in short, rather laughable, since one just by virtue of being in the world, is certain, as a Christian, to possess the true and eternal happiness both here and hereafter.

The world has no conception, except at most a very remote conception of a great solemn festival, that the God-relationship exists, to say nothing of its daily determining a man's life—therefore it can judge in no other way. The invisible law determining such a man's life, its suffering and its happiness, simply does not exist for the world: *ergo* its most lenient explanation of such a life is that it is an oddity, just as we call it madness if a man is incessantly looking about for a bird which none of the rest of us can see; or if a man dances—to music which no other man except himself, even by straining his ears, can possibly hear; or if a man in walking turns aside from his path because of some—invisible barrier. And this, too, is madness. For a bird which is really present, cannot be invisibly present, any more than actual music can be inaudible, or an obstruction on one's path which makes it necessary to go out of the way, can be invisible. But God can only be invisibly and inaudibly present, so the fact that the world does not see Him still does not prove very much.

Let me illustrate this relationship by means of a simple metaphor which I have frequently used, even though for a different purpose, because it is so fertile, so suggestive, so significant. If a strictly disciplined child is in the company of rude or less well-trained children, and it will not share with them in their rude behavior, which to them does not seem in general to be rudeness: the naughty children do not know any way of explaining his behavior except to say that the child must be odd or

foolish. They do not realize that his behavior may be explained in another way, in that, wherever he is, the strictly trained child always has its parents' standard in mind to help it decide what it dares and what it dares not do. If the parents were visibly present, so that the rude children saw them, then they would be better able to understand the child, especially so, if it also seemed to resent having to obey the admonition of its parents; for that would show them that the child would be only too glad to act as the rude children did; and it would be easy enough to see what held the child back. But when the parents are not present, the rude children cannot understand the strictly trained child. They think as follows: *either* that child does not enjoy the things the rest of us do, which makes it stupid or odd; *or* it perhaps enjoys them well enough, but does not dare to—yet, why not? The parents are not present, so it really must be stupid and peculiar. One can, therefore, by no means call it mischievousness or badness in the less polite children that they judge the more strictly trained child in this way. Oh, no, perhaps in their way their intentions are good, they mean well by it. They do not understand the strictly trained child, they enjoy themselves as they are, and therefore they want him to play with them and be a real boy—like the others.

The application of this metaphor is easy to make. The world simply cannot get it into its head (and this is no accident) that a Christian should not have the same pleasures and passions as the world has. But if he does have them, then the world can still less get it into its head why he, from fear of an invisible Being, will foolishly, according to worldly ideas, restrain the innocent and permissible pleasures which it is even "a duty to enjoy"; why he will restrain the selfishness which the world not only calls innocent but praiseworthy; why he will restrain the resentment which the world not only regards as natural but as a sign of his manliness and honor; why he will make himself doubly unhappy, first by failing to satisfy his desires, and next by being ridiculed by the world as a reward of his self-denial.

One easily sees that self-denial is here rightly marked: it has the double sign. Just because this is so, because quite rightly the one who earnestly seeks to obey will fall into double danger: that is why we say that it is the duty of *Christians* to remain in the debt of love to each other.

WORKS OF LOVE

SOME CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS IN THE FORM OF DISCOURSES

BY

S. KIERKEGAARD

Volume II

Copenhagen
1847

CONTENTS

		PAGE
I	Love Edifieth	169
II	Love Believeth All Things—and Yet Is Never Deceived	182
III	Love Hopeth All Things—and Yet Is Never Put to Shame	199
IV	Love Seeketh Not Its Own	214
V	Love Covereth a Multitude of Sins	227
VI	Love Abideth	243
VII	Mercy, a Work of Love, Even If It Can Give Nothing and Can Do Nothing	255
VIII	The Victory of Reconciliation in Love, Which Wins the Vanquished	268
IX	The Work of Love in Remembering the Dead	278
X	The Work of Love in Recommending Love	289
	Conclusion	302

I

LOVE EDIFIETH

But love edifieth.—I CORINTHIANS 8:1

ALL human speech, even the divine speech of the Holy Scriptures about spiritual matters, is essentially metaphorical. And this is quite proper as regards existence in general, since, although from the moment of his birth man is spirit, he does not become conscious of himself as spirit until later, and so sensuo-psychically he has already lived through a certain period of his life before the spiritual awakening. But this first period will not then be discarded when the soul awakens, just as little as the soul's awakening will proclaim itself in a sensuous or sensuo-psychical manner as against the sensuous and sensuo-psychical. That first period is simply taken over by the spirit, and thus employed, thus made the foundation, *it becomes the metaphorical.* The spiritual man and the sensuo-psychical man therefore in a certain sense say the same thing. Yet there is an infinite difference, since the latter does not suspect the secret of the figurative expression, although he nevertheless uses the same word, but not figuratively. There is a world of difference between the two; the one has made the transition, or has allowed himself to be *carried over* to that side, while the second remains on this side; yet there is a bond between them because they both use the same expression. The one in whom the soul has awakened, has not, therefore, abandoned the visible world; he is always, although conscious of being spirit, in the visible world, and even sensuously visible: so he also continues to use the same language except that it has become metaphorical. But the metaphorical expression is not a brand-new word; on the contrary, it is an ordinary word. As the spirit is invisible, so too is its language secret, and the secret lies precisely in the fact that it uses the same word as the child and the common man, but it uses it figuratively, whereby the spirit denies that it is the sensuous or the sensuo-psychical, but does not deny it in a sensuous or sensuo-psychical manner. The difference is by no means a conspicuous difference. We rightly regard it, therefore, as a sign of false spirituality to make a parade of the conspicuous distinction—which is the sign of the purely sensuous, whereas the essence of the spirit is the quiet, whispering secrecy of the metaphorical—to the one who has ears to hear with.

One of the figurative expressions which the Holy Scripture frequently makes use of, or one of the *words* which the Holy Scripture most frequently uses figuratively, is: to *build*, to *edify*. And it is really —yes, it is very edifying to see how the Holy Scripture does not tire of this word, how it does not spiritually desire changes and new turns of

expression, but that, on the contrary, how that which is the true essence of the spirit refashions the thought in the same word! And it is—yes, it is very edifying to see how the Scripture by the use of this simple word is able to indicate the highest and that in the most inward manner; it is like that miracle of feeding the multitude with a limited supply, which nevertheless through the blessing became so richly abundant that there was left a superfluity! And it is—aye, it is edifying, if someone succeeds, instead of busying himself in making new discoveries which will busily supplant the old, in being humbly satisfied with the Scriptural words, in thankfully and inwardly appropriating to himself the traditions of the early Fathers, in establishing a new acquaintance—with the old acquaintances. As children we have all frequently played "Stranger": truly, this is exactly earnestness, spiritually understood, to be able to continue this edifying jest in earnest, to play "Stranger" with old acquaintances.

To edify is a figurative expression; however, we shall now, with that secrecy of the spirit in mind, see *what this word signifies in ordinary use*. To edify is formed from the verb "to build" [*at bygge*] and the adverb "up" [*op*], on which latter the emphasis must consequently be placed. Everyone who upbuilds builds, but not everyone who builds builds up. For instance, if a man builds a wing to his house we do not say that he builds up a wing, but that he builds an addition. This "up" seems consequently to indicate direction in height, direction upward. Yet this does not quite express it. Thus if a man carries a building which is sixty feet high twenty feet higher, we do not say that he builds up his house twenty feet higher; we say that he builds an addition. Now we begin to see the application of the word, for it seems that it does not depend on the height. On the contrary, if a man built a house, even if it was only a little, low house, but he built it from scratch, then we say he built [up] a house. To build [up] is consequently to build something from scratch. This "up" indicates a certain direction as height; but only when height is also depth reversed do we say "build up." So that if a man builds up in height and from scratch, but the depth below ground does not quite correspond to the height, then we certainly say that he builds up, or simply that he builds, although by "simply building" we understand something different. Thus the emphasis is in relation to the fact of building, in building from scratch. We do not call building in the ground building up, we do not speak of building a well. But if we speak about building up, then no matter how high or how low the building is, it *must be from scratch*. We may therefore say that a man began to build a house, but he did not finish. On the contrary, we can never say that a man, however much he may have added to the height of the building, if it was not built from scratch, built it.

How strange! This "up" in the word "upbuilding" means height, but height as contrary to depth; for to build up is to start from the beginning. Therefore the Scriptures say of the man of little understanding, that he "built without a foundation"; but of the man who hears the word in true edification, or, as the Scriptures have it, the one who hears the word and acts accordingly, that he is like a man who built his house and "digged deep." When, therefore, the waters came and the winds blew and beat upon this dependably built house, then we all rejoiced at the edifying sight that the storms could not shake it. Alas, for, as was said with reference to building up, it particularly depends on building on a foundation.

It is commendable that a man, before he starts to build, should reflect on "how high he will be able to build his tower," but if he decides to build, then let him take care to dig deep; for even if the tower, if that were possible, reached to the clouds, if it were without a foundation it was not really built. To build absolutely without a foundation is impossible, it is building in the air. Therefore we are grammatically correct when we talk about building air castles; we do not say "building up air castles," which would be a careless and absurd use of language. For even in expressing the insignificant, there must be harmony between the individual words, such as is not present between "in the air," and "to build up," since the first takes the foundation away, and the latter dispenses with "foundation"; the combination then would be a false overstatement.

This explains the expression "to build up" in simple unfigurative language. Let us now consider it as a figurative expression, and pass over to the subject of this reflection:

LOVE EDIFIETH.

But is that word "edifying," when spiritually understood, such a characteristic adjective for love, that it exclusively belongs to it? It is always quite possible, as regards an adjective, that there are many objects which equally, or even if in varying degrees, still have a claim to this same adjective. If this were the case with "edifying," it would be particularly wrong to emphasize its use, as this reflection does, in its relation to love; it would be an attempt of misunderstanding to impute to love a presumption, as if it wished exclusively to usurp to its own use that which it shared with others—and which love is precisely willing to share with others, since "it never seeks its own." Nevertheless, it is truly so that "edifying" is exclusively characteristic of love; but, on the other hand, this quality of edifying has also the characteristic, that it is able to sacrifice itself in everything, be present in everything—exactly like love. Thus one sees that love in this, its own characteristic quality,

does not isolate itself, or boast of independence and caution in comparison with others, but absolutely surrenders itself; its characteristic is exactly that it has the exclusive quality of absolutely sacrificing itself. There is nothing, simply nothing, which can [not] be said or done so that it becomes edifying; but whatever it is, if it is edifying, then is love present. Therefore we hear the admonition just at the point where a man himself admits the difficulty of formulating definite rules, "Do everything for edification." It might equally well say, "Do everything in love," and have expressed exactly the same meaning. One man may do exactly the opposite of what another man does, but if they each do the opposite—in love, the opposite is edifying. There is no word in the language which is edifying in itself, and there is no word in the language which can [not] be spoken edifyingly and become edifying when love is present. It is therefore, then, very far (alas, it is simply an unkind and divisive error) from being the case that edifying is a *privilege* of the individually gifted, like art and poetry and beauty and other such things; on the contrary, every man by his life and his behavior, by the conduct of his daily life, by his association with his equals, by his words and utterances, ought to and might be equally edifying, and would be so, if he really had love.

We ourselves are also aware of this, for we use the word "edifying" with the widest possible latitude; but what we do not ourselves perhaps realize is that we nevertheless only use it in connection with the idea of love. Still this constitutes the right usage: to be meticulous not to use this word except in connection with love, and within this limitation to make its range illimitable; then everything can be edifying in the same sense that love can be present everywhere.

Thus when we see a single man with praiseworthy frugality carefully making a little suffice, then we honor and commend him; we rejoice; it confirms our sense of the good. But we do not really call it an edifying sight. On the contrary, when we see how a mother, who has many to care for, by frugality and wise economy affectionately knows how to bless the little so that there is enough for all: then we say it is an edifying sight. The edification lies in the fact that at the same time that we see the frugality and economy which we honor, we also see the mother's loving care. On the contrary, we say that it is but little edifying, that it is a distressing sight, to see one who in a way starves in the midst of plenty, and who yet has nothing at all left for others. We say it is a shocking thing to see, we are disgusted with his luxury, we tremble at the idea of the horrible revenge of self-indulgence—the starving in the midst of plenty; but the fact that we look in vain for the least expression of love, confirms our belief that it is little edifying.

When we see a large family crowded into a small apartment, and we

nevertheless see it living in a comfortable, friendly—roomy apartment, then we say that it is an edifying sight, because we see the love which must be in the individuals and in each one of them, since one unfriendly one would be enough to make the whole place seem crowded; we say it because we see that there is always house-room where there is heart-room. And, on the other hand, it is very little edifying to find an uneasy spirit dwelling in a palace, unable to find rest in a single one of the many rooms, and yet not able to spare or dispense with the smallest closet.

Moreover, what is there which may not be thus edifying! We do not think of the sight of a man asleep as edifying. And yet, if you see a child sleeping on its mother's breast—and you see the mother-love, see that she seems to have waited for and now is using the moment while the child is sleeping, truly to rejoice over it, because she hardly dares let the child see how unspeakably she loves it: then this becomes an edifying sight. If the mother's love is not in evidence, if you look in vain in her face and expression to discover the least expression of the joy of mother-love or solicitude for the child; if you see only stolid indifference, as if she would be glad to be rid of the child: then the sight is not edifying. To see the child sleeping by itself is a friendly, a pleasant, a gratifying sight, but it is not edifying. If you wish to call everything edifying, then it is because you see love present everywhere; it is because you see the love of God hovering over the child.—To see a great artist perfecting his work is a glorious, an elevating experience, but it is not edifying. Suppose this masterpiece was marvelous—if now the artist, out of his love for a man, smashed it to pieces: then the sight would be edifying.

Wherever the edifying is, there is love; and everywhere love is, there is the edifying. Therefore Paul says that a man without love, though he speak with the tongues of men and of angels, is like sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. What, too, can be less edifying than a tinkling cymbal! The worldly, however glorious and however vociferous it is, is nevertheless without love, and therefore it is not edifying; the most insignificant word, the slightest act with love or in love, is edifying. Therefore knowledge puffeth up. And yet knowledge and the communication of knowledge may also be edifying; but if it is, it is because there is love. To commend one's self seems little edifying, and yet even this too may be edifying. Does not Paul sometimes do it? But he does it in love, and, as he himself says, "for edification." It would therefore be the emptiest of all speeches to talk about what can be edifying, since everything can be so; it would be the emptiest of all, just as it is the most distressing accusation which can be brought against the world, that one sees and hears so little that is edifying. Whether it is rare to

see wealth is neither here nor there; we should rather see a general well-being. If it is rare to see a masterpiece, oh, well, in a certain sense that makes no difference, and, as far as that goes, men for the most part care little about it. It is otherwise with edifying. At any given moment there are countless numbers of men living; it is possible that everything which any man says, everything which any man undertakes, may be edifying: alas, and yet it is so rare to see or hear anything edifying!

Love edifies. Let us now consider that which we developed in the introduction to this discourse, whereby we at once assured ourselves against the danger of the discourse falling into error through choosing an insuperable task, since everything can be edifying. To edify is to build on some foundation. In the simple story about a house, a building, everyone knows what is understood by the ground and the foundation. But what is, spiritually understood, the ground and the foundation of the spiritual life which shall support the building? It is simply love; love is the origin of everything, and, spiritually understood, love is the deepest foundation of the spiritual life. Spiritually understood, the foundation is laid in every man in whom there is love. And the building which, spiritually understood, will be erected is again love; and it is love who does the building. Love edifies, and this means that love builds it up. In this way the task is limited; the discourse does not spread out on the individual and the manifold; it does not in confusion begin on something which it must quite arbitrarily break off somewhere in order to finish; no, it centers itself and its attention on the essential, on one and the same thing in all the manifold. The talk is first and last about love, just because the fact of edifying is love's most characteristic purpose. Love is the foundation, love is the building, love edifies. The act of edifying is the building up of love, and it is love which edifies. It is true we sometimes speak in a general sense about edifying; we use the word in contrast to the corruption which would only tear down, or in contrast to the confusion which can merely tear down and divide; about the fact that it is the clever man who edifies, the one who knows how to direct and lead, the one who knows so well how to instruct in his line, the one who is master of his art. Every such person builds up in contrast to tearing down. But all of this building up of knowledge, of insight, of ingenuity, of righteousness and so on, is still, insofar as it does not build up love, not edification in the deepest sense. For, spiritually, love is the *foundation*, and to edify is *to build on this foundation.*

Consequently when the speech is about the work of love in edifying, this must then *either* indicate that the lover implants love in another man's heart; *or* it must indicate that the lover presupposes that love already exists in the other man's heart, and just through this presup-

position, he builds up the love in him—radically, insofar as he affectionately presupposes love at bottom. One or the other of these conditions is necessary for edifying. But I wonder if one man can implant love in another man's heart? No, this is a superhuman relation, an unthinkable relation between man and man; in this sense human love cannot edify. It is God, the Creator, who must implant love in every man, He who is Himself love. It is therefore unkind and by no means edifying, for someone presumptuously to imagine himself as wishing and being able to create love in the other man; all busy and self-important zeal in this respect neither builds up love, nor is itself edifying. The first relationship would be unthinkable for edifying; hence, we must consider the second relationship—between man and God. Thus we have gained the explanation of what it means, that love edifies, on which explanation we shall now reflect: *the lover presupposes that there is love in the other man's heart, and just through this presupposition he builds up the love in him—on that foundation, insofar as he affectionately presupposes that it exists at bottom.*

The speech can then not be about what the lover, who wishes to edify, will now do to transform the other man, or to force the love forth in him, but it is about how the lover edifyingly constrains himself. Certainly this is already edifying, to see how the lover edifies by constraining himself! Only the non-lover imagines that he is able to edify by constraining the other; the lover constantly presupposes that love is present, and just by this he is edifying. A builder thinks little about the stone and gravel he will use in building; a teacher presupposes that the pupil is ignorant; a disciplinarian presupposes that the other man is perverted: but the lover who edifies has but one course—to presuppose love; what further he constantly has to do is only constantly to constrain himself to presuppose love. Thus he lures the good forth, he encourages love, he edifies. For love can be and will only be treated in one way, by being loved forth; to love it forth is to edify. But to love it forth consists exactly in presupposing that it is basically present. Men can therefore be tempted to become master-builders, to become teachers, to become disciplinarians, because those things seem to imply having control over others; but to edify, as love does, cannot tempt one, for that means exactly to be the servant; therefore only love has the desire to edify because it is willing to serve.—The master-builder can point to his work and say, "That is my work"; the teacher can point to his pupil; but the love which edifies has nothing to point at, for its work consists only in presupposing it.

Again, this is very edifying to consider. Suppose the lover succeeded in building up love in another man; when the building stands there, the lover stands aside by himself, abashed he says, "I have always

presupposed this." Alas, the lover has no merit at all. The building up of love is not like a monument to the master-builder's art, or, like the pupil who is a reminder of the teacher's instruction; the lover has done nothing, he has only presupposed that there was love at bottom. The lover works so quietly and so soberly, and yet the forces of eternity are in motion. Love humbly makes itself inconspicuous just when it is working hardest; aye, its labor is as if it did nothing at all. Alas, to busyness and worldliness this is the greatest folly conceivable, the idea that, in a way, doing nothing at all should be the hardest work. And yet it is true. For it is more difficult to rule one's own spirit than to take a city, and more difficult to edify as love edifies, than to carry out the most marvelous undertaking. If it is difficult for one to rule one's own spirit, then how difficult to annihilate one's self completely in one's relation to another man, and still do everything and suffer everything! If it would ordinarily be difficult to begin without the presupposition, truly the most difficult of all is to begin to edify with the presupposition that love is present, and to end with the same presupposition, so that one's entire labor is discounted in advance, since the presupposition from first to last involves self-denial, or that the master-builder be hidden and as nothing. The only thing with which we are able to compare this edification of love is the secret working of nature. Man sleeps, but the forces of nature rest not either night or day: no one considers how they go on—while all take delight in the beauty of the fields and the fruit of the pastures. So is love manifest in the same way; it presupposes that love is present like the germ in the corn, and if it succeeds in bringing that to growth, then has the love concealed itself, as if it were hidden, whereas it was working early and late. Nevertheless, this is the edifying wonder in nature: you see all this glory and then it impresses you edifyingly if you happen to consider how strange it was that you did not see at all the one who produced it. If you could see God with the sensual eye, if He, if I dare say this, stood by your side and said: "I produced all this!" then would the edification have disappeared.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is present. Thus one lover edifies the other, and here it is easy enough to presuppose it, since love is generally known to be present. Alas, but love is never perfectly present in any man, insofar as it is possible for him to do something else than presuppose it; possible to discover one or another fault or frailty in it. And then when he has unkindly discovered this, he wishes perhaps, as they say, to take it away, to take the mote away in order really to build love up. But love edifies. The one who loves much, to him is much forgiven; but the more perfect the lover presupposes the love to be, the more perfect a love he loves forth. In no worldly relations is there found any relation where there is thus like for like, where that

which results corresponds so exactly to what was presupposed. Let no one raise an objection, let no one appeal to experience, for this would be unkindly arbitrarily to fix a day when it must appear how it turned out. Love itself does not understand such things, it is eternally certain about the fulfillment of the presupposition; if this is not true, then the love is already at the point of exhaustion.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is fundamentally present, therefore love also edifies there where, humanly speaking, love seems to be lacking, and where, humanly understood, it seems first and foremost necessary to tear down, not indeed for the sake of pleasure but for the sake of salvation. Tearing down is the opposite of building up. This contrast never shows more clearly than when the discourse is about the fact that love edifies; for in whatever other connection there may be talk about edifying, it still has a resemblance to tearing down, that is, doing something through another. But when the lover edifies, then it is exactly the opposite of tearing down, because the lover does something through himself: he presupposes that love is present in the other man—which is certainly exactly the opposite of doing something through the other man. Tearing down satisfies only too readily the sensual man; edifying in the sense that one does something through the other man, can also satisfy the sensual man; but to edify by overcoming one's self satisfies only love. And yet this is absolutely the only way to edify. But in the well-meant zeal for tearing down and building up, one forgets that in the last analysis no man is able to plant the ground of love in another man.

Just here it appears how difficult the art of building is, as practiced by love, and as it is described in that celebrated passage by the apostle Paul; for what he says about love is just a closer definition of how love manages to edify. "*Love is long-suffering,*" and thereby it edifies; for long-suffering is just continuing to presuppose that there is love at bottom. He who judges, even if this came about slowly, that the other man is wanting in love, takes away the foundation—he cannot edify. But love edifies through long-suffering. Therefore it *harbors neither envy nor spite*, for envy and spite negate the love in the other man, and consume, if that were possible, the foundation of love. The love which edifies endures the other man's misunderstanding, his ingratitude, his anger—that is certainly enough to bear; how then should love also be able to bear envy and spite! That is the way things are divided in this world: he who bears envy and malice does not bear the other man's burdens, but the lover who loves does not bear malice and envy, he bears the burdens. Each one bears his own burden, the envious and the lover, both in a certain sense are martyrs, for as a

devout man has said: the envious man is also a martyr—but the devil's.

"*Love seeketh not its own*," therefore it edifies. For he who seeks his own must push the other aside; he must tear down in order to get a place for his own house which he wishes to build. But love presupposes that love is basically present, therefore it edifies. "*It rejoiceth not in iniquity*"; but he who wishes to tear down, or at least wishes to seem important by pretending that it is necessary to tear down, he may be said to rejoice in iniquity—otherwise there would be nothing to tear down. Love, on the contrary, rejoices in presupposing that love is fundamentally present, therefore it edifies. "*Love beareth all things*"; for what does it mean to bear all things? In the final analysis it means being able to find love in everything, as it is fundamentally presupposed. When we say of a man who has a very strong constitution, that as regards food and drink he can stand anything, we mean by that, that his system is healthy enough to get nourishment from even unhealthful food (just as the sick may be injured by even healthful food); we mean that his system derives nourishment even from that which would seem least nourishing. In this way love bears all things, always presupposing that it is fundamentally present—and thereby it edifies.

"*Love believeth all things*"; for to believe all things is exactly, although it does not seem so, although it seems just the opposite, to presuppose that love is fundamentally present, even in the misguided, even in the perverted, even in the most malicious. Mistrust precisely takes the foundation away by presupposing that love is not present; therefore mistrust cannot edify.

"*Love hopeth all things*"; but to hope all things is truly, although it does not seem so, and even seems to be the opposite, to presuppose that love is, nevertheless, fundamentally present, and that it will manifest itself in the erring, in the misguided, even in the lost. Was not the father of the prodigal son perhaps the only one who did not know that he had a prodigal son, for the father's love hoped all things? The brother knew at once that he was hopelessly lost. But love edifies; and the father regained the prodigal son just because he who hoped for everything, presupposed that love was fundamentally present in his son. On the father's side, in spite of the son's dissipation, there was no rupture (and a rupture is exactly the opposite of edifying), he hoped all things; therefore by his fatherly forgiveness he edified in truth, because the son vividly felt that his father's love had borne with him, so that there had been no breach.

"*Love endureth all things*"; for to endure all things is exactly to presuppose that love is fundamentally present. When we say that a mother endures all her child's naughtiness, do we mean thereby that as woman

she patiently suffers evil? No, we mean something else; we mean that as mother she always continues to remember that it is a child, and consequently to presuppose that the child still really loves her, and that this will soon be evident. Ordinarily we talk about how patience endures all things, not about how love does. For patience endures all things and is silent; and if the mother thus endured the child's naughtiness, then we should really mean by that that the mother and the child were estranged from each other. On the other hand, love endureth all things, patiently silent—but presupposes in all stillness that love is still present in the other man.

Thus love edifies. *"It is not puffed up, does not behave itself unseemly, is not easily provoked"*: it is not puffed up at the thought that it might create love in the other man; it is not provoked and precipitate, impatiently, almost hopelessly concerned with what it must first tear down in order to build up again; no, it always presupposes that love is fundamentally present. Therefore it is unconditionally the most edifying sight to see love edifying, a sight by which even the angels are edified. And therefore that is unconditionally the most edifying talk, if a man really succeeds in telling how love edifies. There is many a friendly, many a salutary, many an enchanting, many an impressive, many an elevating, many a captivating, many a persuasive sight, and so on; but there is but one edifying sight, that of seeing love edifying. Whatever you may have seen of horror or abominations in the world, which you could wish to forget, because they tend to break down your courage and your confidence, to make life distasteful to you, and the idea of living abhorrent: consider only how love edifies, and you are edified in living! There are very many different things to speak about, but there is only one which is edifying: how love edifies. Therefore, whatever may befall you, so embittering that you might almost wish that you had never been born, and wish that you were dead, the sooner the better: only consider how love edifies, and you are again edified in speaking. There is but one edifying sight and one edifying subject: yet everything can be said and done edifyingly, for everywhere where there is edifying there is love, and wherever there is love, there is edifying, and as soon as love is present, it edifies.

Love edifies by presupposing that love is present. Have you not experienced this, my hearer? If any man has ever spoken in this way to you or acted in this way toward you, so that you really felt edified by him, then it was because you were vividly conscious of his presupposition that there was love in you. Or what kind of a man do you think the other man ought to be who might truly edify you? Is it not true that you would wish him to have insight and knowledge and ability and experience? But still you would not believe that it decisively depended

on these; on the contrary, it would depend on his being a reliable, kindly man, that is, a truly loving man. Hence you believe that to be able to edify decisively and essentially depends on being loving, or in having love to such a degree that one can depend upon it.

But what, then, is love? Love is presupposing love; to have love is to presuppose love in others; to be loving is to presuppose that others are loving. Let us understand each other. The characteristics a man may have may either be characteristics he has for himself, even if he makes use of them for others; or attributes for others. Wisdom is one quality inherent in himself; power and talent and knowledge and so on may also be attributes peculiar to himself. To be wise is not to say, not to assume, that others are wise; on the contrary, it may very certainly be true, if the truly wise man assumes that all men are far from wise. Moreover, because "wise" is an exclusively personal attribute, there is nothing in the thought to prevent one from assuming that there might live, or has lived, a wise man who dared say that he assumed that all other men were unwise. In the thought (of being wise—and assuming that all others are unwise), there is no contradiction. In the realities of life, such an expression would be arrogant, but merely in the thought as such, there is no contradiction. On the other hand, if one were to believe that he himself was loving, but also that all other men were not loving, then we should have to say: "No, stop; there is a contradiction here in the thought itself; for to be loving is just to assume, to presuppose, that other men are loving." Love is not an exclusively personal attribute, but an attribute by virtue of which or in which you exist for others. In ordinary conversation we of course say, when we sum up a man's qualities, that he is wise, understanding, loving—and we do not notice what a difference there is between the last attribute and the first. His wisdom, his experience, his understanding are his own, even if others benefit by them; but if he is truly loving, then he does not have love in the same sense as he has wisdom, but it is exactly his love which presupposes that the rest of us have love. You praise him as the lover; you believe love is an attribute he has, as it really is; you feel edified by him just because he is loving, but you do not notice that this is because his love indicates that he presupposes love in you, and that just for this reason you are edified, just for this reason the love in yourself is built up. If it were actually true that a man could be loving without this indicating a presupposed love in others, then you would not in the deepest sense feel yourself edified; however certain it was that he was loving, you would not in the deepest sense feel yourself edified, any more than you would in the deepest sense be edified, no matter how certain it was that he was wise, understanding, learned and experienced. If it were possible that he might

in truth be loving without this signifying that it presupposed love in others, then you could not fully rely upon him, for the test of reliability in the lover is exactly that, even when you are distrustful of yourself, of your own love, he is loving enough to presuppose, or rather he is the lover who presupposes it.—But you demanded that a man in order truly to be able to edify should be truly loving. And to be loving has shown itself as signifying: presupposing love in others. So you say absolutely the same thing that has been developed in the discourse.

So the reflection returns to its beginning. To edify is to presuppose love; to be loving is to presuppose love; only love edifies. For to edify is to build up something on a foundation, but spiritually love is the foundation of everything. No man can lay the foundation of love in another man's heart; nevertheless, love is the foundation, and one can only build on that foundation; hence one can only edify by presupposing love. Take love away, then there is nothing which edifies, and no one who is edified.

II

LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS—AND YET IS NEVER DECEIVED

Love believeth all things.—I CORINTHIANS 13:7

NOW abideth faith, hope and love, these three; but the greatest of these is love," which is therefore the foundation of everything, is before everything, and abides when all else is done away with. Love is consequently the "greatest" of "these"; and what is there more perfect to compare love with than faith and hope! But he who is greatest from the standpoint of perfection must also, if I may venture to say so, take upon himself the duty of bringing himself into subjection, and become even more perfect. In a worldly sense a man may sometimes be the most distinguished without being the most perfect, and this exactly constitutes the worldly imperfection. It is true that the greatest man may be able to do what the lesser man can do; and this holds true about love, that it can take upon itself the tasks of faith and hope, and do them even more perfectly.

We shall now consider this thought as we reflect on the theme:

LOVE BELIEVETH ALL THINGS—AND YET IS NEVER DECEIVED.

We shall first consider what it means when we say that love believes all things, and next, how the one who loves, simply by believing all things, can be assured against every deception. For truly, not everyone who believes everything is therefore a lover, and not everyone who believes everything is thereby assured against every deception—not even faith, if it will believe everything. And even if it might seem that the fact of being assured against every deception is a good for love, an advantage it has, then this meditation would not really be suitable as a subject for consideration in an essay about the *works* of love: since it is not that. The fact of being assured against every deception is a work, a task, entirely synonymous with that of believing all things, so that one can just as unconditionally say that love believeth all things, as it can say that it is never deceived, since they are one and the same thing. It is not as if the action were one thing, and the prudence which guards against a man being deceived were another. It is not from the standpoint of earthly wisdom that love is never deceived; for to love so that one is never deceived is, according to what earthly wisdom says and thinks, the most stupid and foolish thing one can do; moreover, it is an offense to prudence—and therefore it may readily be recognized as belonging essentially to Christianity.

Love believeth all things. Thoughtlessness, inexperience, credulity believe everything that is said; vanity, conceit, self-satisfaction believe all the flattering things that are said; envy, spite, depravity believe all the evil things that are said; mistrust believes nothing at all; experience will teach that not to believe everything one hears is the wisest course; but love believes everything.

Consequently mistrust believes nothing at all; it is the exact opposite of love. Generally speaking, men do not, I suppose, think very highly of mistrust, but still it by no means follows that they have absolutely and unanimously decided to renounce all mistrust unconditionally, or that they have absolutely and unanimously decided to recommend the love which believes everything, unconditionally. Perhaps, strange to say, men prefer to make a compromise, hence a dissident compromise between the mistrust which—a little loving, still believes something, and the love which—a little mistrustful, still has a suspicion or two. Moreover, if someone wished to describe the shrewd secret of mistrust, to array it in the supernatural greatness of shrewdness, of cunning, in the dazzling appearance of sagacity, then it might well tempt many. There might be someone who would cleverly give us to understand that that was just what he had discovered—proud of his discovery. And in contrast to this, as so often happens to the good, the love, which believes all things, would appear to a great disadvantage, so that many would not even dare to confess that they could wish to be so simple-minded.

What really is the shrewd secret of mistrust? It consists in an abuse of knowledge, an abuse which without further ceremony, in a single breath wishes to attach itself *ergo* to what as knowledge is absolutely true, and only becomes something else when it is preposterously believed by virtue of this knowledge, something which is just as impossible as it is preposterous, for one does not become a believer by virtue of knowledge. That which mistrust says or talks about is really only knowledge; the secret and the falsity lie in the fact that, without further ceremony, it transposes this knowledge into faith, pretending it to be nothing, pretending that it was something that need not even be noticed. "since everyone who has this knowledge must *necessarily* decide in the same way"; as if, consequently, it were eternally certain and absolutely decided that if a man has knowledge, then it is also known what conclusion he will reach. The deception lies in the fact that mistrust, by virtue of the disbelief inherent in it, infers, assumes, believes what it does infer, assume and believe, *from* its knowledge (for the appearance and fallacy is that knowledge causes the mistrust), whereas *from* the same knowledge, by virtue of belief, a man can infer, assume and believe exactly the opposite. Mistrust says: "Deception stretches unconditionally as far as truth, duplicity unconditionally as far as honesty; there is no

absolute criterion of truth or of honesty or of sincerity. So, too, in relation to love; hypocrisy and craftiness and cunning and seduction deceptively extend absolutely as far as love extends; they are able to resemble true love so deceptively that there is no absolute criterion, because with every expression of the truth or with every expression of true love there exists the possibility of a delusion which exactly corresponds to this." And so it is and ever shall be. Just because existence will test "you," test "your" love or whether you have love, just for that reason it places truth and deception before you in the balance of possibilities opposed to each other, by the aid of reason, so that now when "you" judge, that is, when in judging you *choose*, it becomes manifest what you yourself are. Alas, many believe that the judgment is something that takes place the other side of the grave, and this is also true; but one forgets that the judgment lies much closer, that it is going on every moment, because existence is judging you in every moment you live, since to live is to judge one's self, to reveal one's self. Just for this reason existence must be so arranged that you may not by the aid of an authenticity of knowledge, evade revealing yourself in your judging or in how you judge. When then deception and truth are placed in the balance of possibilities opposed to each other, then it is decided whether you are suspicious or loving. For perhaps some one says, "Even that which seems to be the purest of feelings might still be a deception"—oh, well, that is possible and will always be possible: "*Ergo* I choose mistrust, or to believe nothing," that is, he reveals his mistrust.

Let us reverse the conclusion we drew about "truth and falsehood unconditionally stretching equally far; consequently it may be possible that what even appears to be the basest conduct might be pure love." Oh, well, that is possible, and it will be possible: *ergo* the lover chooses to believe everything, that is, he manifests his love. A man whose thinking is confused certainly thinks that existence is a fairly muddy element: oh, not even the sea is so transparent! If someone, therefore, can prove that one ought to believe nothing at all because of the possibility of deception, then I can prove that one ought to believe everything—because of the possibility of deception. If anyone thinks that one ought not to believe even the best of men because of the possibility that he might prove a deceiver, then this is also true of the converse, that you can expect good in even the worst of men, for it would be possible that his baseness was only an appearance of evil.

Love is the exact opposite of mistrust and yet it is based on the same knowledge; as far as knowledge goes, we may say that they are indistinguishable from one another (in the infinite sense knowledge is objective); only in the conclusion and in the decision, in the *faith*

(which believes everything, and believes nothing) are they exactly opposed to each other. When love, for instance, believes everything, it is by no means in the same sense as thoughtlessness, inexperience and credulity believe everything, which believe everything through ignorance and naiveté. No, love is just as well aware as anyone of everything which mistrust knows, yet without being mistrustful; aware of what experience knows, but also aware that what we call experience is really that mixture of mistrust and love.

"How much secrecy may not dwell in a man, or how much can still not be hidden! How ingenious is not that hidden inwardness in concealing itself, and in deceiving or avoiding others; that inwardness which preferably wished that one should not even suspect its existence, shame-facedly fearing to be seen, and fearing like death to be completely manifest! Is it not true that one man never completely understands another? But if he does not completely understand him, then it is always possible that the most uncertain might still have a quite different explanation, and, as it is well to note, if this is true, such an assumption might very well explain a great many cases, and thereby confirm its own truth, and yet later appear to be untrue as soon as something happens it cannot explain. And it would be possible that this case or this little further definition might even come at the last moment.

"It is because of this that all calm and intellectually dispassionate observers, who prefer to understand the inner man by a searching and illuminating study, that just these are so infinitely cautious in their judgment, or would rather abandon it altogether, because enriched by their observations they have developed an understanding of that mysterious world of the hidden things of the spirit, and because as observers they have learned to rule over their own passions. Only superficial, hasty, passionate men who have not learned to know themselves, and naturally for that reason do not know others, are given to such offhand judgments. The well-informed, the intelligent, never do this. A young, inexperienced man, who perhaps has never been on a horse before, casually springs up on the first one offered; but the very strong and experienced rider—notice how carefully he scrutinizes a strange horse before he will mount it, how doubtfully and cautiously he goes about it, how he scarcely ventures to mount it until he has let it run on a line in order to learn its disposition. And then, on the other hand, he continues to test it, long, long after the inexperienced rider has given up. For the inexperienced rider, who knows nothing about horses, believes that 'one horse is just like all the others—*ergo* I know them all.' Only an experienced rider thoroughly understands how great a difference there is, how one may be mistaken about a horse in very different and contradictory ways, and how unreliable every criterion is because each

horse has its own peculiarities. And, now, the differences between man and man! How infinite! If this were not true, then would mankind be debased; for man's superiority over the brutes is not only the one which is most often mentioned, the universally human, but also that which one most often forgets, that every individual within the species has essential diversities and characteristics. And this superiority is really the proper human superiority; the first superiority is the racial superiority over the animal species. Moreover, if it were not a fact that one man, honest, sincere, respectable and God-fearing, can under the same circumstances do exactly the opposite of what another man does, who is also honest, sincere, respectable and God-fearing: then the God-relationship would not essentially exist, not in its most profound significance. If one man were able with absolute truth to judge every man according to a common pattern, then would the God-relationship be essentially abolished; then would everything face outward, heathenishly finding its complete expression in the state and community life; then living would become far too easy, but also very empty; then would neither personal exertion nor deepening of the self be possible or necessary, which, in the most difficult collisior of the infinite misunderstanding, is exactly that which develops the God-relationship in a man."

Can you tell me who has said this? No, that is impossible; it is entirely uncertain; the most suspicious and the most kindly man could, as far as knowledge is concerned, equally well have said it. No man has said it; it is superhumanly uttered; it is a sound which first becomes articulate through the inspiration of diversified personalities, who pronounce it by adding voice to it. It is knowledge, and knowledge as such is impersonal, and must be communicated impersonally. Knowledge posits everything in possibility, and is to that extent outside the reality of existence in the possibility. The individual first begins his life with *ergo,* with *faith.* But most people simply do not notice that, in one way or another, every moment they live they live by virtue of an *ergo*, of a *faith*—so heedless are their lives. There is no decision in knowledge; decision, the determination of the personality, and determination are first in *ergo*, in faith.

Knowledge is the infinite art of ambiguity, or the infinite ambiguity; at its highest it consists in bringing opposing possibilities into equilibrium. To be able to do this is to have knowledge, and only the one who knows how to describe the balancing of these opposing possibilities, only he communicates knowledge. To expect to impart a decision by means of knowledge or knowledge by means of a decision is preposterous, as it has certainly become in these times—aye, preposterous it is and remains, but in these times it has become the truly profound, the true profundity of profound thought. Knowledge is not suspicion, for knowledge is

infinitely objective; it is the infinite indifference in equilibrium. Nor is knowledge love, for knowledge is infinitely objective, it is the infinite indifference in equilibrium. Nor is knowledge defilement, since it is the infinite indifference. The suspicious man and the lover have knowledge in common, and the suspicious man does not become suspicious because of his knowledge, nor does the lover become the lover through that knowledge. But when a man's knowledge has balanced the opposing possibilities, and he is about to or wishes to pronounce a judgment, then it appears in what he then thinks next, who he is, whether he is suspicious or loving. Only extremely confused and ordinary men believe that they are able to judge another man by virtue of knowledge. From this it is evident that they do not even know what knowledge is; that they have never taken the time and pains to develop the infinite, objective sense for possibilities; or by means of the art of infinite ambiguity to understand the possibilities and bring them into equilibrium; or to understand them clearly. In a kind of nebulous condition, they have a stolid or a passionate preference for a certain kind of possibility; they judge that a little of it is enough, and they call that judging by virtue of knowledge; and they think, self-satisfied in thus—*believing*—by *virtue* of knowledge (a sheer contradiction), that they are assured against mistakes—which would be restricted faith (a new contradiction).

It is quite common to hear men express a great fear of making a mistake in judging. When you listen more closely to what is said, then, alas, there is so often a distressing misunderstanding in this—serious fear. Behold that noble, simple, wise man of old; he became what he was—moreover it was not something great—he did not become a great capitalist, nor an ambitious statesman in this best of all possible worlds. Impoverished, laughed at, ridiculed, accused, condemned, he remained the noble, simple, wise man, still so rarely seen; almost the only one who really made a distinction between what he understood and what he did not understand; and he remained so, because he "feared most of all to be in error."

I wonder if this elevation of thought, this sublime equipoise, is what men are really thinking about when they are afraid of making a mistake in judging. Possibly. But then it would also be possible that the fear is sometimes somewhat one-sided. All men have a natural fear of making a mistake—through believing too well of a man. The mistake, on the other hand, of believing too badly of another man, is perhaps less feared, at least not in comparison with the first. But then if we did not fear most of all being in error, then we are, on the contrary, in error through our one-sided fear of a certain kind of error. It mortifies our vanity and our pride to have thought too well of a swindler, to have been foolish enough to believe him—for it is a contest between brain

and brain. One is vexed at oneself, or one finds that it is (yes, we speak in this way, and it does not help much, or rather it is a deception, to use more ceremonious and unusual expressions in an edifying discourse) "so stupid" to have been a fool. But ought it not to seem equally stupid to us, to say the least, to have believed evil, or suspiciously to have believed nothing, where there was good! I wonder if sometime in eternity it will not prove to have been more—than "stupid"; for let us use the word that is constantly used in the world; it does just as well applied to the eternal! But here in the world it is not "stupid" to believe evil of a good man; it is a superciliousness by which one adroitly gets rid of the good; but it is "stupid" to think well of an evil man, that is why one protects himself—since one fears so much being in error. The lover, on the other hand, truly fears being in error, therefore he believes everything.

The world tempts in many ways, among others also by making it appear that it would be so restricting, so foolish: lovingly to believe everything. But this is a misunderstanding. One draws a line through "lovingly" (alas, instead of underscoring it!), and so lays the emphasis on "foolish: to believe everything"; instead, the entire emphasis lies on the fact that it is "*love*" which believes everything. Truly it is not knowledge that defiles a man, far from it; knowledge is like sheer transparency, precisely then the most perfect and clearest; just as the most perfect water is tasteless. The servant of justice is not defiled because he has better information than the criminal about all intrigues. No, knowledge does not defile a man; it is suspicion which defiles a man's knowledge, just as love purifies it.

In relation to the fact of judging another man, knowledge leads at most to the balancing of opposing possibilities—on that fact the difference becomes apparent by what is now decided. For the Scriptures warn against judging, and they add "that you be not judged"; so that it looks as if one might sometimes judge without being judged in turn. But this is not the case. At the very moment you judge another man, or condemn another man, you judge yourself; for the act of judging another man is, in the last analysis, merely to judge yourself, or to reveal what you are. You perhaps do not notice it, it escapes your attention, how earnest existence is, how by showing you all these many men, it, as it were, gives you occasion to judge, so that you even deem yourself lucky that you are among those—undeservedly happily favored who are nothing, and therefore in all heedlessness have the comfortable task of judging others: and then it is existence who is courteous or strict enough not to regard you as nothing; then it is existence which judges you. How eager a man is to judge—if he knew what it means to judge: how hesitant he would be! How easily he seizes upon the least

crumb in order to get the opportunity to judge—it is an opportunity to ensnare himself! Through knowledge you merely arrive at equilibrium, just when the art is perfectly practiced; but the conclusion returns in the person of the judge, and makes it manifest—that he is the lover, for he decides: *ergo* I believe everything.

Suspicion, on the other hand, has (naturally not through its knowledge which is infinitely indifferent, but through itself, through its *disbelief*) a preference for evil. The fact of believing nothing at all is exactly the boundary which begins by believing evil. The good is of course the object of faith, and therefore the one who believes nothing at all started by believing evil. The fact of believing nothing at all is the beginning of *being* evil, for it shows that one has nothing good in one's self, since faith is precisely the good in a man, which does not come with much knowledge, nor need he lack it because his knowledge is insignificant. Suspicion cannot hold knowledge in equilibrium; it defiles its knowledge, and therefore is nearer to envy, spite, corruption, which believe everything evil.

But now what about the one who was so zealous to judge, to pour out his indignation, his powerful or impotent indignation upon another, yet without really knowing whereof he judged? What if in eternity he discovers and is forced to confess that the one he judged was not only innocent, but that he was the noblest, the most disinterested and the most high-minded of men! Someone has said that sometime in eternity (assuming that we are not ourselves excluded) we shall note with wonder one or another missing whom we had so definitely expected to find there. But I wonder if we shall not also see with wonder one or another there whom we would have excluded without ceremony, and see that he was far better than one's self, not as if he had later become so, but just in connection with the very thing which determined the one judging to exclude him. Nevertheless, the lover believes all things. With the blessed joy of wonder he will sometime see that he was right; and if he made a mistake in believing the good—the fact of believing the good is in itself a blessing. Charitably to believe the good is certainly not a mistake, but one makes a mistake by not doing so.

The fact of suspiciously *believing* nothing at all (which is quite a different thing from *knowledge* about the equilibrium of opposing possibilities) and the fact of lovingly *believing* everything, is thus not an understanding, or the inference of an understanding, but a choice which must be made just when knowledge has balanced the opposing possibilities; and in this choice, which certainly takes the form of a judgment upon others, the one who judges is revealed. The fact that thoughtlessness, inexperience, simplicity, *believe* everything, is an understanding, a foolish understanding; the fact of *lovingly believing* every-

thing is a choice by virtue of love. Instead of doing as suspicion does, which uses its shrewdness to secure itself by believing nothing, love uses its acuteness to discover the same thing, that deception and truth unconditionally stretch equally far, and it then decides by virtue of the faith it has in itself: *ergo* I believe everything.

Love believes everything—and is never deceived. Wonderful! To believe nothing at all for fear of being deceived seems reasonable; for how could anyone deceive someone who believes nothing! But to believe everything, and in that way throw himself away, a prey to all deception and to all deceivers, and nevertheless just by so doing assure himself everlastingly against every deception: that is strange. And yet I wonder if the one, even if he is not deceived by others, is still not deceived, most terribly deceived, certainly by himself, through believing nothing at all; defrauded of the highest, of the resignation, of the blessedness of love! No, there is but one way to assure one's self against ever being deceived, that is charitably to believe everything.

Let us speak about it in this way: Can a man deceive God? No, in his relation to God a man can only deceive himself; for the God-relationship is the supreme good, so that whoever defrauds God defrauds himself most terribly. Or, for purposes of comparison, let us consider the relation between man and man. Can a child deceive its parents? No, the child deceives itself; it is merely an appearance (hence, an illusion), a short-sighted deception, that makes it look to the child, and to anyone who has no more understanding than the child, as if it were the child who deceived its parents, while, alas! the poor child really deceives itself. One may reasonably assume that as far as the child is concerned, the parents are superior to it in wisdom and insight, and therefore are superior in their true love for the child, who only foolishly understands loving himself, so that to deceive the parents would be the greatest misfortune which could befall the child, the greatest misfortune, if it were not his own fault. But then it is—truly—not the parents who are deceived; on the contrary, it is the child, and it only looks (an illusion) as if the child deceived its parents; *in a childish and foolish sense it is true* that the child deceived its parents, but *consequently it is not true,* since it is true only in a "childish and foolish sense." On the other hand, would it not be a pitiful and disgusting sight to see a father or mother who, in relation to the child, did not have the true earnest, concerned idea of their own superiority, based on the eternal responsibility of being truly desirous of the child's best interest? Would it not be pitiful and disgusting to see a father or mother, who might therefore degrade themselves by indecent quarrels with the child, become irritated and indignant on their own account, because they childishly had the foolish idea that it was the child who deceived them? Such a relation-

ship between parents and a child is indeed indecent, moreover, almost crazy, as if to slap the child were to indicate being slapped by the child, and thus, by setting aside all dignity, superiority and legitimate authority, were to prove merely that the father or the mother was physically stronger.

Consequently the true superiority can never be deceived if it remains true to itself. But true love, in comparison with everything which is not love, hence compared with every illusion, is unconditionally superior: as a result it can never be deceived if, through believing all things, it remains true itself, or continues to be true love.

This is certainly very easy to understand; the difficulty must therefore lie elsewhere, in that there must be a lower range of ideas which does not even suspect what true love is, what love is in itself, and what this blessedness is in itself. The trouble is that there is a great multitude of illusions which tend to hold a man down in the lower range of ideas where the deception and the fact of being deceived signify exactly the opposite of what they signify *in the infinite conception of love. This conception signifies that the only possibility of deception lies in refraining from loving, in submitting to giving up love itself and thereby losing its blessedness.* For in the infinite sense the only deception possible is self-deception; infinitely speaking, one need not fear him who merely kills the body; to be killed is, from the infinite standpoint, not a danger, nor is the kind of deception the world talks about, any danger. And again this is not difficult to understand. The difficulty consists in carrying the task to completion, in acquiring the true conception of love, or, more correctly, in becoming the true lover; for just through believing all things, he guards against illusion, and fights to preserve himself in the true love. But the illusion will constantly obtrude itself, about like that illusion which believes that the sun moves around the earth, although we know that it is the earth that moves.

There is a lower conception of love, hence a lower love, which has no conception about love itself. This conception regards loving as a claim (the requital of love is what is demanded), and the fact of being loved (the requital) as an earthly good, as temporal—alas! and yet as the highest happiness. Moreover, if it is true, the deception may certainly play the master, just as in the capitalistic world. One pays out his money to buy one or another convenience; if one has paid his money but has not received the convenience, then one is defrauded. A man makes love a transaction; he sacrifices his love in bartering, but if he does not get requited love in exchange, then he feels defrauded. The deception may also consist in the deceiver's having gained the love of the deceived in such a way that perhaps the one deceived could not keep from loving him, because he loved in such a way—that he could only

love one single man, and this man was the deceiver. It is not the intention of this reflection to deny that the lover was deceived, nor that the deceiver was, yes, that he was a wretched deceiver; but it does deny that this lover was the true lover. For the one who is—loving, in such an extraordinary way that he can love but one single man, he is not the true lover, but he is in love with love, and he who is in love with love is a self-lover, as was earlier demonstrated. But that one may deceive a self-lover, the discourse has never wished to deny.

There is here as everywhere, something very profound in existence. We sometimes hear the most vociferous complaints about being deceived in love. The accuser wishes to prove exactly what a rare lover he himself is, and in turn how unusually paltry the deceiver is, and he proves this by protesting that he can and could love only one man. He does not notice that the more violent this complaint becomes, the more it becomes a self-accusation, which indicates that he himself has been and is a self-lover, of whom it is certainly true that he can love but one (for the true lover loves everyone, and that without demanding requital), and therefore he might really be deceived, which the true lover cannot be. That is to say: everyone who essentially and decisively admits that he has been thus deceived in love, so that he has lost the best, to say nothing of everything, he thereby denounces himself as a self-lover; for the best is love in itself, and one can always retain that if one wills to be the true lover. Everyone, therefore, who only wills to have the lower, the illusory idea of what love is, he certainly takes pains not to be deceived; he learns from the capitalists or from those who carry on trade, what precautions they use against swindlers. Alas! and in spite of all these precautions, moreover even if he succeeds by means of these precautions in insuring himself against every deception: he and all like-minded are still essentially deceived through leading their lives in that world of illusion, in that world where all are essentially victims, whether the one now groans about the other's having deceived him, or the other brags of not having been deceived. The difference between them is no greater than it would be in an insane asylum if one of the patients were to imagine himself something through not being insane in the same way as another, while all of them were essentially insane.

The lower conception and illusion of love to which men resort in this interest and service, is temptation; the difficulty consists precisely in acting to defend one's self against it; for it is easy enough in a quiet moment to perceive that the true lover who believes everything, cannot be deceived. "But still it is so stupid to be deceived." If you yourself were the true lover, who believes everything, then you would indeed see that it is an impossibility, would see that you were not deceived. But

is there anything stupid in knowing within yourself that you are not deceived? No. "But it is, nevertheless, so stupid that it should seem so to others." See, here is the deception. To know in yourself and in truth that you are not deceived, and still find it stupid that you should seem to be deceived. What do you call that? We call it vanity, or, what here amounts to the same thing, we call it: not being absolutely the true lover. Alas, and if vanity could get power over the true lover, then he would certainly be deceived, for it drags him out of love down into the low, the world of pettiness and wrangling, where one fools and is fooled, vain of being able to dupe others, stupid in being duped, and therefore vain of being able to avoid it.

When we see the true lover deceived by the cunning, the artful and the hypocrite, we are revolted, and yet why? Sometimes because we do not see punishment and retribution follow in the external world; hence because we ask to see the meaning of the imperfection and the externality presented as a satisfying drama where there is external retribution; then again because we sink down to the lower level of ideas; again because we sluggishly and thoughtlessly forget that the true lover cannot be deceived. We have a right to cry woe to the one who leads a blind man astray; here it is quite proper to demand external punishment, for one can deceive a blind man; the fact of being blind does not assure against every deception. But the true lover who believes everything cannot be deceived. In a certain sense the lover knows very well if someone deceives him, but by not wishing to believe it, or by believing everything, he preserves himself in love, and thus is not deceived—consequently, here, too, one has an illustration of how foolish it is, how injudicious the busyness, which thinks that knowing is higher than believing; for that which precisely assures the lover, who in a certain sense knows that he has been deceived, is to believe everything.

One cannot deceive the true lover who believes everything, for *to deceive him is to deceive one's self.* What really does constitute the highest good and the greatest happiness? In truth it is certainly loving; next to this is being truly loved. But then it is impossible to deceive the lover, who just by believing everything abides in love. If it were possible to defraud anyone of money in this way, so that the so-called victim retained his money: then would he have been defrauded? But that is exactly the case here. The deceiver becomes contemptible through his attempt, and the lover preserves himself in his love, abides in love and hence is in possession of the highest good and the greatest happiness; consequently, he certainly is not deceived! The deceiver, on the contrary, deceives himself. He does not love, and thereby he has already defrauded himself of the supreme good and the greatest happiness. Next to this comes the being loved by one who loves in truth—other-

wise being loved might become a source of great unhappiness to one. Again it is this which the deceiver is about to swindle himself out of, insofar as he prevents himself from having the true benefit of this love, and insofar as he might succeed, if his deception were presumably discovered, in forfeiting the other man's love, in making the lover unhappy through truly having ceased to love—instead of through believing all things abiding in love, assured against all deception.

Let it sometime take place before our eyes, so that it can really become clear how pitiful the deceiver looks in comparison with the true lover—for there is much said about seducing and seducers, about deception and deceivers, but one rarely talks about or describes the *true* lover. Hence, I imagine a cunning man, an artful one, a hypocrite; I take pleasure in equipping him who is initiated into all the secrets of deception, with all seductive gifts. Now what will he do? He wishes to deceive the lover; he wishes (for he has that much sense in spite of his depravity, so that he perceives how great a good it is to be loved) by means of his cunning, to see himself beloved. But why all this fuss, this wholly superfluous expenditure of cunning and artfulness? It is the true lover he wishes to deceive, but the true lover loves everyone, so the deceiver can attain love in a far simpler way. Moreover, if we were speaking about earthly love (self-love) then there would at least be some meaning in the deception; for if the beloved can only love one single person, then, if it were possible, it would be suitable by means of the deceptive art of cunning and artifice, to become that one. But as regards the true lover, the deception is from its very inception exactly meaningless, the deceiver from the very beginning is shown in the most pitiful light. Now furthermore. The deceiver naturally succeeds in being loved, naturally—moreover, the deceiver thinks and must naturally think that this result is due to his cunning and artfulness and skill; poor, deceived deceiver! He does not notice that he is dealing with the true lover, who loves him because the true lover loves everyone. In what an absurdity is not the wretched deceiver now involved! Not as if the deception had failed; no, that punishment is far too insignificant; no, the deception is successful, and the deceiver is proud of his deception! But wherein lies the deception, what kind of a deception is it he talks about? Naturally the deception must lie in the fact that although the lover loves him, in addition to enjoying this good of being loved, he coldly and proudly and mockingly also enjoys the self-satisfaction of not loving in return. It quite naturally escapes him (for how could a deceiver realize that true love exists!) that he was dealing with the true lover, who loves without asking for any requital, who justly estimates the love and its eternal happiness by not asking any requital. Consequently, by the use of cunning the deceiver has led the lover to love him—but that is what

the lover is so infinitely willing to do. The deceiver has presumably fooled him by not loving in return—but the true lover regards asking for a requital as a pollution, a debasement of love, and considers that loving without the reward of requited love, is the highest happiness. Who then is the victim of deception? What is there to say about the deception? The deceiver talks at random and does not even understand what he is saying, like that man at whom we all laugh, that man who lay in the ditch and still believed he was riding. To deceive in this way, is it not as if one were to call it stealing to put money into a man's pocket! The true lover has become richer; for each *more* that he gives in loving, and for each new time that he gives his love, relinquishing all thought of requital, the richer he becomes. Or is the true lover deceived if it is not revealed what an unworthy object of love the deceiver is? The act of loving is the supreme good, but then only the love which asks requital, hence the false love, can be deceived through remaining ignorant of the fact that its object was unworthy.

Or is the true lover deceived if it becomes evident how unworthy an object of love the deceiver is and was? The fact of loving is the supreme good and the greatest happiness. You know that one who is in need of money, in order to get money approaches a man he had depended on, and who he believes has money: he is fooled then if the man is insolvent and has no money. But the one who wishes to give his money away, and does not in the most remote way wish or demand repayment, he is certainly not deceived—because the recipient has no money. But the cunning deceiver, who is prompted by the smoothest and most insinuating motives of cunning, does not notice how clumsily he behaves. He believes himself to be superior, he smiles in self-satisfaction (alas, as if you saw the self-satisfied smile of the insane, which is something both to laugh at and to weep over!) ; he does not suspect that the lover is infinitely superior. The deceiver is blinded, he does not even notice his terrible impotence: his deception is successful—and he confers a benefaction; his deception is successful—and he makes the true lover still richer; his deception is successful, he succeeds—and yet it is just himself who is deceived. Poor victim! Even this way to salvation is cut off from him, so that his deception fails! If an insane man wished to convince a rational man of the correctness of his insane thoughts, and to a certain degree succeeded, would this not be the most terrible thing of all, would it not be almost like the act of an unmerciful existence, for if he had failed, then the deranged man might realize from this that he was insane; but now it is hidden from him, and his madness is indeed incurable. So with the deceiver; but it is not an unmerciful but a just punishment upon him, that his deception succeeded—and just therein is his perdition.

What, then, in truth is the quarrel between the deceiver and the lover? The deceiver wishes to trick his love from the lover. This cannot be done; the true lover has, simply by not requiring the least requital, assumed an impregnable position. To cheat him out of his love is no more possible than to cheat a man out of the money which he as donor stands ready to give and does give to one. The quarrel is therefore really about something else—whether it might be possible for the deceiver (something he by no means intends or considers) to become the occasion of the lover's fall, so that the lover fell away from love and sank down in the world of illusion, in a childish wrangling with the deceiver, because the lover gave up the love which loves without asking requital. However, the true lover guards against the possibility of this just by believing all things, hence by loving the deceiver. If the deceiver could understand this, he would lose his reason. An earthly lover (the self-lover) believes that he is deceived when the deceiver has fooled him into loving him, without the deceiver's loving in return—and the true lover believes that he himself is saved when by believing all things, he succeeds in loving the deceiver. The earthly lover regards it as a misfortune to continue to love the deceiver; the true lover regards it as a victory if he is successful in continuing to love the deceiver. Wonderful! The deceiver must become more and more conceited about his own wisdom because his deception succeeds so extraordinarily; at last it even ends by his regarding the lover as a poor, incompetent, stupid devil. And yet it is just by means of this very same fact that the true lover is everlastingly and infinitely assured against deception! Do you, my hearer, know any stronger expression for superiority than the fact that the superior one looks as if he were the weaker? For the stronger, who looks as if he were stronger, establishes a standard of superiority; but the one who, although superior, looks as if he were the weaker, negates the standard and the comparison, that is, he is infinitely superior. Have you never in life seen this relation of infinite superiority, which certainly is not plainly seen, for the infinite is never seen directly? Take it in the matter of the infinite superiority of another, and you will see that he looks like a plain, ordinary man; only a man who thinks that he has more sense than others, but is not quite certain about it, or is weak and foolish enough to boast of a comparative relation of superiority, strives to give an appearance of superiority of understanding.

So, too, with the lover who believes everything. This credulity can so easily be confused with incapacity, and yet there is the profundity of wisdom in this simplicity. It can so easily be confused with weakness, and yet the strength of eternity is in this impotence. The lover can so easily look like a poor, friendless man whom anyone can deceive, and yet he is the only one who is eternally and infinitely assured against

deception. But we simply do not see it; humanly speaking the confusion lies near enough, especially in these clever times which have become too *clever* to *believe* in *wisdom*. The confusion lies near enough. For the lover who believes everything is not immediately manifest; he is like those plants whose propagation is in secret: he breathes in God, he draws the nourishment for his love from God, he is strengthened through God. That humanly speaking he is deceived, he sees in a certain sense himself; but he knows that deception and truth stretch equally far, and for that reason it might still be possible that the deceiver was not a deceiver, and therefore he believes everything. For this end the lover has courage, courage to believe everything (in truth the highest courage!); courage to endure the world's contempt and insults (truly the greatest victory, greater than anything which is gained in the world, for it overcomes the world!); courage to endure the world's finding it so indescribably foolish, while it still excellently understands that from which he draws his conclusion, but not his conclusion, any more than a *suspicious* world can understand the everlasting happiness which the true lover has in himself.

Still, suppose that sometime in eternity it appeared that the lover *really* had been deceived! How—if it actually is necessary to repeat it once more? When loving is the highest good and the greatest happiness; when the lover just by believing everything, abides in the happiness of love: how then could he, in time or eternity, be deceived! No, no, there is in time and eternity only one deception possible with respect to true love, the self-deception, or the renouncing of love. The true lover therefore will not even understand the objection. Alas, but the rest of us unfortunately understand it only too easily; for the lower range of ideas and the covenant of worldly passions with illusions are so difficult to free one's self from. At the very moment when one has best understood the truth, the old ideas suddenly come upon one again. The infinite, the eternal, consequently the true, are so alien to the natural man that it is with him as it is with a dog, which can indeed learn to walk upright for a moment, but still is constantly wanting to walk on all fours. One can almost force a man's thought to have to admit that since deception unconditionally stretches equally as far as truth, one man cannot really judge the other, but the judge reveals only himself—about as when someone with all his might strikes down on a dynamometer, and does not know that it is a dynamometer, hence he believes that he really is striking something, while it is really only his strength which is being tested. And when one has understood this in this way, then one may still seek one more evasion; one can lay hold on eternity in a curious way, counting on eternity to reveal whether he *really* was a deceiver. But what does this prove? It proves that one is not the true lover who

has the eternal happiness of love in himself, or who has the true conception of earnestness about eternity. If a man yields to this impulse, it immediately drags him down to its low level of pettiness, where the last and the highest aim is not the happiness of love itself, but the wrangling of sophistry.—But the true lover believes everything—and yet is never deceived.

III

LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS—AND YET IS NEVER PUT TO SHAME

Love hopeth all things.—I CORINTHIANS 13:7

BY the use of many parables and the employment of many figures of speech, the Holy Scriptures seek in various ways to add dignity and solemnity to our earthly existence; to secure air and vision through laying hold on the eternal. And this is in truth needed. For when the worldliness of the God-forsaken earthly life immures itself in proud self-satisfaction, this enclosed air generates a poison in itself. And when time apparently creeps on so slowly in our temporal existence, and yet with such a subtle haste that we are never consciously aware of its passing; or when the moment sticks fast and remains stationary; when everything, everything conspires to turn our thoughts and our energies into the service of the moment: then is the vision lost, and this isolated, God-forsaken moment of the temporal existence, be it longer or shorter, signifies a falling away from the eternal. This is why the need has so frequently been felt at various times for a refreshing, inspiring breeze, a mighty gust of wind, which would purify the air and drive out the poisonous vapors; a need for the saving impulse of great events, which save by stirring up the stagnation; a need for a great revivifying vision of expectation—so that mankind may not be stifled in worldliness or perish in that suffocating moment!

However, Christianity knows only one way and one way out, while none the less it always does know one way and one way out. By the aid of the eternal Christianity is able at every moment to secure air and vision. When the pressure of business increases, just because the moment is extended, when it rushes impetuously about in the moment which, eternally understood, makes no progress; when the industrious sow and reap and sow again and reap again (for industry harvests many times); when the industrious fill their barns full of what they harvested and rest on their merits—whereas, alas! the man who in truth wished the good, during that same time does not see the least reward of his labor, and becomes a joke as one who does not know how to sow, as one whose labor is in vain and who only beats the air: then Christianity furnishes the vision by means of its parable about this earthly life being the time of sowing, eternity the time of harvest. When the moment, just because it is standing still, is like a whirlpool (for a whirlpool does not move forward); when there is striving, winning and losing and winning again, now at one point, now at another—but the one

who wishes the good in truth, is the only one who alone is losing, and losing everything as it seems: then Christianity affords a vision by means of the parable about this earthly life being the time of tribulation, of striving, eternity the time of victory. When the moment is halted in the miserable intricacies of pettiness, which sneeringly parodies the most sacred things, the good, the true, in a wretched belittlement, sneeringly plays the game of distributing honor and shame; when everything is made more vainglorious by being dragged down into this seething wretched commotion: then Christianity affords air and vision, secures for life dignity and solemnity by the aid of the parable showing that scene in eternity where it will be eternally decided who has won the garland of honor, and who was put to shame.

What a solemnly earnest festival! Truly, what are honor and shame if the surroundings are not such as give the honor or the shame their infinite significance! Even if a man deservedly won honor here in the world, what solemnity does the world have to give it significance? Suppose a pupil is deservedly rebuked or deservedly honored: if the solemn ceremony were to take place on the stairway; if the teacher who awards the honor and the demerits were a wretched fellow; if none, or as good as none, of those dignitaries were invited whose presence would be an honor to the occasion, but only an even greater number of ordinary men whose reputation was, to say the least, ambiguous: what then are honor and shame? But eternity! Do you know any banquet hall whose arches are as lofty as those of eternity? Do you know any place, even any cathedral, where there is this sacred stillness, like that of eternity? Do you know any group, even the most select circle of venerable men, which is so certain that no one is present against whom honor might have the least, the very least, objection, so certain that no one is present except those whom honor honors, as eternity is? Do you know any festal hall, even if its walls are of mirrors, which so infinitely and solely reflects the demands of honor; so infinitely refuses even the least, the most inconspicuous crevice for dishonor to conceal itself in, as eternity?—If you should there be put to shame!

By the help of the eternal Christianity affords a vision for every moment, as touching honor and shame, if you will assist by hoping. Christianity does not bear you up to some loftier place from which you can look out over a somewhat wider range: that is still only an earthly hope and a worldly vision. No, Christianity's hope is eternity; and therefore there are lights and shadows, beauty and truth, and above all the transparency of distance in its plan of existence. Christianity's hope is eternity; and Christ is the Way; His abasement is the Way, but also when He ascends into heaven He would also be the Way.

But love which is greater than faith and hope, assumes also the work

of hope, or assumes hope, the hoping for others, as a task. It is even edified and nourished by this hope of eternity, and then again it acts affectionately toward others in this hope, which we shall now consider:

LOVE HOPETH ALL THINGS—AND YET IS NEVER PUT TO SHAME.

For truly not everyone who hopes all things is therefore the lover; nor is everyone who hopes all things thereby assured against ever being put to shame; but affectionately to hope for all things is the opposite of despairingly hoping nothing at all, either for one's self or for others.

To hope all things, or what amounts to the same thing, *always to hope*. It certainly seems at first glance as if hoping all things were something which might be done once for all, since "all things" gathers all the many into one, and insofar into what one might call an eternal moment, as if hope were at rest, in tranquillity. However, this is not so. For hoping means the synthesis of the eternal and the temporal; the consequence is that the expression for the task of hope in the form of eternity is to hope all things: for the task of hope in the form of the temporal existence always to hope. One expression is no truer than the other; on the contrary, each of the expressions becomes untrue if it is set in opposition to the other, instead of being united in expressing the same thing: at every moment always to hope all things.

Hoping lays hold upon the future, on the possibility, which again, as distinguished from reality, is always a duality—the possibility of progress or retrogression, of building up or tearing down, of good or of evil. The eternal "*is*," but when the eternal touches on the temporal, or is in the temporal, they do not meet each other in the "present," for then the present would itself be the eternal. The present, the moment, is so swiftly past that it does not really exist except as a dividing line, and it is consequently past while the past is what had been the present. Hence when the eternal is in the temporal, then it is in the future (for the present cannot lay hold on it, and the past is past) or in the possibility. The past is the actual, the future the possible; the eternal is everlastingly the eternal; in time the eternal is the possible, the future. We therefore call the day tomorrow the future, but we also call the eternal life the future. The possible, as such, is always a duality, and the eternal is equally proportional in the possibility to its duality. On the other hand, if a man who is concerned with the possible, lays hold equally on the duality of the possible, then we say: he is *expectant*. Expecting contains in itself the same duality as does the possible, and to expect is to relate oneself to the possible clearly and only as such. On that the relationship divides, inasmuch as the expectant man

makes a choice. To lay hold expectantly on the possibility of the good is *to hope*, which just for this reason cannot be any temporal expectation, but is an eternal hope. To lay hold expectantly on the possibility of evil is *to fear*. But the one who hopes as well as the one who fears is expectant. Yet as soon as the choice is made, the possible is changed, for the possibility of the good is the eternal. It is only in the moment of contact that the doubleness of the possible is equal. By the decision to choose hope one decides, therefore, infinitely more than it seems, for it is an eternal decision. Only in the mere possibility, hence for the merely or indifferently expectant, are the possibilities of good and of evil equal; in the making of a distinction (and choice is the making of a distinction) is the possibility of the good more than possibility, for it is the eternal. Hence it happens that he who hopes can never be deceived; for to hope is to expect the possibility of the good, but the possibility of good is the eternal.

So we must define more exactly what it means to hope; in ordinary speech we often call that hope which is by no means hope, but is a wish, a longing, a yearning expectation, now for one thing, now another, in short, it is the laying hold by the expectant on the *multitude* of possibilities. Thus understood (when hope really merely indicates expectation) the youth and the child find it easy enough to hope, because the youth and the child are themselves still a possibility. And, on the other hand, it is again quite proper, when one sees how with the years the possible, or the sense for the possible, and the hope very frequently diminish in men. This may explain why experienced people speak in such a disparaging way about hope, as if it belonged only to youth (as the hope of the youth and of the child certainly do), as if hoping, like dancing, were something youthful, something which older people neither enjoyed nor had the facility for. Oh, well, it is easy to hope and also to do by the aid of the eternal, that is, by the aid of the possibility of good. And even if the eternal is far from being youthfulness, it still has far more in common with youthfulness than with the sullenness which is frequently honored by the name of earnestness; than with the slowing down of the years which under fairly fortunate conditions are as such fairly satisfied and calm, but after all have nothing to hope for, and which under unfortunate conditions are more disposed to grumble peevishly than to hope. In youth a man has expectation and possibility enough; it develops of itself in the young, like the precious myrrh which drips from the trees in Arabia. But then when a man has become older, then his life becomes more often than not an indolent repetition and paraphrase of the same thing. No possibility frightens it awake, no possibility animates it rejuvenatingly; hope becomes something

which is neither here nor there, and possibility something as rare as greens in winter.

One gets along without the eternal by the aid of habit, shrewdness, imitation, experience, custom and use. And truly, take all this, bring it together prepared by the smoldering or merely earthly-blazing fire of passion, and you will see you can get all kinds of things out of it, a variously prepared tough slime, which one calls judicious living. But no one ever gets any possibility from it, the possibility, that wonderful possibility, which is so infinitely fine (not the most delicate spring shoot is so delicate!), so infinitely fragile (not the finest of woven linen is so fragile!), and yet precisely brought about, created, by the help of the eternal, and so stronger than everything, if it is the possibility of the good.

One thinks to speak empirically by dividing a man's life into certain periods and years, and then calling the first period that of hope or of possibility. What nonsense! In that way one absolutely leaves out the eternal in speaking about hope, and yet one talks about hope. But how is that possible, since hope lays hold on the possibility of the good, and thereby on the eternal! On the other hand, how is it possible to speak about hope in such a way that one must assume that it belongs exclusively to a certain age? The eternal certainly extends over the whole life, so there is and consequently must be hope until the last, so there is consequently no exclusive age which is hope's, but the whole of one's life must be the time of hope! One also thinks to speak empirically about hope—by discarding the eternal. As in the theater by shortening the time and by condensing the incidents one gets to see the events of many years in the course of a few hours: so one wishes theatrically to arrange matters in the temporal existence. One rejects God's plan of existence: the temporal existence is safe and sound development, the complication—the dissolution of eternity. One arranges everything within the temporal existence, expends a score of years on the development, then ten years on the complications of existence; then some year one draws the knot too tight, and then dissolution follows. Undeniably, death is also a dissolution, and then it is past; one is buried—yet not before the dissolution of corruption has set in. But truly everyone who does not wish to understand that one's whole life must be a time of hope, he is in despair, regardless of, completely regardless of whether he knows it or not; whether he deems himself lucky in his supposed well-being, or he spends a toilsome life in boredom and trouble. Everyone who dismisses the possibility of his existence being forfeited the next moment—if he does not dismiss this possibility because he *hopes* for the possibility of the good, hence everyone who lives without possibility, he is in despair; he breaks with the eternal, he arbitrarily ends

the possibility, he makes an end, where there is no end, without the assent of eternity; instead of being like the one who writes according to another's dictation, who constantly has the pen ready for the next word, so that he does not presume irrelevantly to place a period before the meaning is complete, or rebelliously to throw the pen aside.

If someone wishes to help a child with a very hard task, what does he do? Certainly he does not set the whole task all at once before the child, so that the child becomes discouraged and gives up all hope of accomplishing it. He assigns a small portion at a time, but always enough so the child does not stop as if it were finished, and yet not so much that the child cannot manage it. This is the gentle deception of education; it really holds something back. If the child is deceived, does it happen because the teacher is a man who cannot answer for the next step? But now eternity; that is still the greatest task that is set for a man, and, on the other hand, it can still vouch for what comes next; and the child of the temporal existence (the man) still acts like a little child regarding the infinite task! If eternity were sometime and in its own language to set man the task without regard for his apprehension and his limited ability: the man would be in despair. But then it is truly wonderful that this, the greatest power, eternity, can make itself so small, that it is so divisible, that that which is everlastingly one, by putting on the form of the future, of the possible, by the help of hope, educates the child of the temporal existence (the man), teaches him to hope (for hoping is itself an education, is the laying hold on the eternal), if he does not then voluntarily austerely choose to be dispirited through fear, or if he does not impudently choose to despair, that is, to evade the education of the possibility. Rightly understood, the eternal assigns only a little portion at a time in the possibility. Eternity is through the possible always *near* enough at hand, and yet *far* enough away to keep a man moving forward, progressing, toward the eternal. Thus eternity draws and lures man by the possibility from the cradle to the grave, if he will but choose to hope. For the possibility is, as was said, twofold, and just because of this it is the true education. The possibility is equally as severe, or can be equally as severe, as it can be gentle. Hope does not lie as a matter of course in the possibility, for fear may also lie in it. But the one who chooses hope, him the possibility, by the aid of hope, teaches to hope. Still the possibility of fear, the severity, remains, secretly present as a possibility, if it should be needed for the sake of the education, for the purpose of arousing; but it remains hidden, while the eternal allures by the aid of hope. For the alluring always consists in being equally as *near* as *far away*, whereby the hopeful one is always kept hoping, hoping everything, preserved in hope for the eternal, which in the temporal existence is the possible.

So it is with hoping all things. But *lovingly* to hope everything indicates the relation of the lover to other men, so that in his relation to them, in hoping for them, he always keeps the door of possibility open with infinite preference for the possibility of the good. Hence, he lovingly hopes that at every moment there is the possibility, the possibility of the good for the other man; this, the possibility of the good, indicates the increasingly glorious progress in the good from perfection unto perfection, or the rising again after the fall, or salvation from perdition, and so on.

That the lover is right, that at every moment the possibility exists, is easily perceived. Alas, but perhaps many would far more easily understand it, were we to allow despair to say the same thing—for in a certain sense despair does say the same thing. The despairing one *knows*, too, what lies in the possibility, and yet he gives up the possibility (for renouncing the possibility is just what despair means), or, even more correctly, he ventures impudently to *assume* the impossibility of the good. Again it appears here that the possibility of the good is more than possibility; for when one ventures to *assume* the impossibility of the good, then all possibility has ceased for him. The apprehensive one does not *assume* the impossibility of the good; he fears the possibility of evil, but he does not infer, he does not venture to assume the impossibility of the good.

"It is possible," says despair, "it is possible that even the most honest enthusiast might sometime become weary, renounce his striving, and sink down in the service of wretchedness. It is possible that even the most fervent believer might sometime let go of faith and choose disbelief. It is possible that even the most ardent love might become chilled, become cold. It is possible that even the most upright man might still go astray and be lost. It is possible that even one's best friend might be changed into an enemy, even the most loyal wife be changed to a wanton: all this is possible, therefore despair, relinquish hope, above all, do not hope in any man or for any man!"

Yes, all these things are certainly possible, but then, too, the converse is also possible. "Therefore never unlovingly give up any man or your hope for him, for it might be possible that even the most prodigal son might still be saved; that the most bitter enemy, alas, he who was your friend, it is possible that he might again become your friend; it is possible that he who sank lowest, just because he had stood so high, it is still possible that he might again be lifted up; it is still possible that the love which grew cold, might again be fanned into flame: therefore never give up any man, not even at the last moment; do not despair, rather hope all things!"

Hence, "it is possible," insofar as the despairing and the lover agree

on the same thing; but then they are eternally separated, for despair hopes nothing at all for others, love hopes everything. Despair loses courage, and now sometimes makes use of the possibility as a delightful means of stimulation, if one can sometimes be amused by the unstable, vainglorious, weird blazing of the possibility. It is noticeable enough, and it shows how deeply hope is entrenched in mankind, that one finds among men who were chilled in despair, a dominant inclination to toy and trifle with the possibility, a sensuous misuse of the imagination. Coldly and defiantly the despairing man will not hope for the other man, even less work for the possibility of the good in him; but the despairing one delights in letting the other man's fate play the buffoon in the possibility; indifferent to hope or fear, he delights to play with the other man's fate, to consider now one, now another possibility, to seesaw in the air, while he himself proudly and unkindly despises it all.

Still, by what right do we call a man despairing who gives up another man? It is one thing to despair yourself; it is something else to despair about another man. Oh, well, but if that is still true which the lover understands, and if it is true that one, if one is the lover, understands what the lover understands, that at every moment there is the possibility of the good for the other man: then the giving up of another man as hopelessly lost, as if there were no hope for him, is a proof that one is not one's self the lover; and hence the one who gives up the possibility is the despairing man. No one can hope unless he also is loving; he cannot *hope for himself* without also being loving, for the good qualities hang infinitely together; but if he is loving, he also has hope for others. And to the same degree as he hopes for himself, absolutely to the same degree he hopes for others; and to the same degree as he hopes for himself, absolutely to that same degree he is the lover. And to the same degree as he hopes for others, absolutely to that same degree, he hopes for himself; for this is the infinitely precise, eternal like for like, which is in everything eternal.

Oh, everywhere where love is, there is something so infinitely profound! The true lover says: "Hope everything, give up no man, for to give him up is to give up your love for him—for if you do not give that up, then you have hope. But if you give up your love for him, then you cease to be the lover." But we generally talk in another way, in an imperious and unkind fashion of our relation to the love in us, as if one were himself the master and autocrat of his love in the same way that a man is of his money. If someone says, "I have stopped loving that man," then he thinks that it is "that man" who loses, the man who had been the object of his love. The speaker even believes that he controls his own love in the same way as when one who has assisted an-

other man with money says, "I have stopped giving him this assistance," so that the giver now keeps the money himself which the other had formerly received, the one who is now the loser. For when it is a matter of money, the giver is far from losing it through this change of policy with regard to giving. But it is not so with love; perhaps the one who had been the object of love loses, but the one who "has given up his love for this man," he is the loser. Perhaps he does not notice it, perhaps he does not notice that his very words mock him when he says, "I have given up my love." But if he has given up his love, then he has ceased to be loving. To be sure he adds "my love for this man," but this does not help in the same way that it does about money, for it cannot be that way with love. The adjective "loving" does not apply to me when I have given up "this man," although, alas! I may even have imagined that he was the one who lost.

And so, too, with regard to the fact of despairing of another man—that is one's self to be in despair. Moreover, it loses little time, this reflection! One grows worse so easily and so readily by despairing over another man—and presumably being certain of one's self, full of hope for one's self; and the very men who self-complacent feel safest personally, are the quickest of all to despair over others. But however easy it is, it still cannot really be done—except in thoughtlessness, which certainly is the easiest for many men. No, here again is the eternal like for like, to despair over another man is to be one's self in despair.

For the lover hopes all things. And that is true which the lover says, that, according to his understanding, even at the last moment there is the possibility of the good, even for the most disheartened, hence, there is also hope. It is true, and it will be true for everyone in his relations to other men, if he will hold his imagination in check, undisturbed and unobscured by unkind passions, with the eternal view of the reflection of the eternal in the possibility. If therefore a man cannot understand what the lover understands, then it must be because he is not the lover; it must be because there is something which prevents him from keeping the possibility clear (for if the possibility is kept clear, everything is possible), while he lovingly chooses the possibility of the good, or hopes for the other man. It must be because there is something which oppresses a man and gives him a tendency to expect faintheartedness, destruction and perdition for the other man. This sense of oppressiveness is the worldliness and thus the earthly passions of the unloving mind. For worldliness is in itself heavy, hard, supine, slow, out of harmony, and cannot admit the possibility, least of all the possibility of good, either for its own sake or for the sake of another.

There is a *shrewdness* which, almost proud of this shrewdness, believes that it has a particularly profound knowledge of the shabby side

of existence, the knowledge that everything ends in wretchedness: how could one with this viewpoint even at the last moment be able in love to hope for another man, who already early in the day begins to expect and to be prepared for his destruction!—*There is wrath and indignation*; even if one does not have murder on his conscience, he still hopelessly gives up the hated, hence he takes the possibility away from him; but is not this to slay him spiritually, spiritually to thrust him down into the abyss—insofar as that depends on wrath and indignation!

There is an evil eye. How could an *evil eye* be able lovingly to catch sight of the possibility of the *good*! There is *envy.* It is swift to give a man up, and yet it does not really so much give him up as it lets him go; not only that, it is early ready to help along his destruction. And when this has been made certain, then envy hastens to its spiteful retreat and calls together its even more abominable kinsfolk, who are called *spitefulness,* so that they may rejoice together—to their own detriment.

There is a *cowardly, timorous pettiness,* which does not have the courage to hope anything for itself! How then could it hope the possibility of the good for others? For that it is too petty, and has too much kinship with envy! *There is a worldly, vainglorious mind* which would die of shame and disgrace if it should happen to make a mistake, to be made a fool of, to become a laughingstock (the most terrible of all horrors!) through having hoped for another man something which did not come to pass. So this vainglorious and worldly mind insures itself by hoping nothing, and it finds the idea of lovingly hoping all things so infinitely foolish and so infinitely laughable. But in that the vanity of the world is wrong, for what is foolish is never infinite; that would be exactly the consolation of one who while he lived must endure much of the world's foolishness, so that he might always be able to say: "It does not last forever, no, God be praised! it has an end." Nor is experience right in saying that the wisest thing is not to hope everything for another man—yet, of course, experience is right, otherwise it must learn and teach how foolish it is for a man to love others for the sake of his own advantage; and only insofar as a man does that is he unwise in hoping everything.

When then all this, this shrewdness, this wrath and indignation, this envy, this spitefulness, this cowardly, timorous pettiness, this worldly, vainglorious mind, when all this, or at least some of it, is in a man, and in the same degree as it is present in him: then there is no love, and in the same degree as all this is present in him, the love is correspondingly less. But if there is less of love in him, there is also less of the eternal; but if there is less of the eternal in him there is also less possibility, less sense of the possibility (for the possibility arises from the fact

that the eternal touches in time the eternal in man; if there is nothing eternal in this man, the contact with the eternal is in vain, and there is no possibility); but if there is less possibility there is also less hope, just because and as there is less love, which might lovingly hope the possibility of the good. The lover, on the other hand, hopes everything; no indolence of habit, no pettiness of understanding, no sophistry of prudence, no amount of experience, no slackness of the years, no bitterness of evil passions corrupt his hope for him or falsify the possibility. Every morning, aye, every moment, he renews his hope and recreates the possibility, while love abides and he in it.

Even if the lover is not able to do anything else for others, even if he is not able to bring any other gift: he still brings the best gift, he brings hope. There, where everything seems so hopeful and is so rich in expectation for the promising youth, there love still brings the best gift, hope; but also there where men already for a long time have believed they had held out to the uttermost, there too love hopes to the last, moreover to the "last day," for not until then is hope past. If you have ever seen a physician going about among the sick, then you have certainly noticed that the best gift he brings, better than all medicine, and better even than his care, is the hope he brings, when it is said, "The doctor hopes." Still a doctor has only to do with temporal conditions, therefore it must happen again and again that the moment comes when it would be false for him to deny that he had given up the sick, that the sickness was unto death. But the lover—what joy for the lover that he always dares to hope; what joy to him that eternity always vouches to him that there is always hope. For the lover, the true lover, does not hope *because* eternity vouches to him for it, but he hopes *because* he is the lover and he thanks eternity that he dares hope. And so he always brings the best gift, better than congratulations on the greatest happiness, better than all human sympathy for the greatest unhappiness; for hope, the possibility of good, is the support of eternity. When all the calamities befell the race, hope still remained behind. On that paganism and Christianity are agreed; the difference is, and it is an infinite one, that Christianity has an infinitely lower conception of all these calamities, and an infinitely more blessed conception of hope. But the hope which remained, remained only with the lover. If there were no love, then neither would there be hope; it would be like a letter which lies uncalled for. If there were no love, it would be with hope as with a letter whose contents would be so very welcome, but where there was no one to deliver the letter. Then love, although greater than hope, would assume it as its duty and its task, to bring hope.

However, is there not something dark, something obscure in all this reflection, so that one cannot rightly decide what it is all about? For

"Love hopeth all things" may indicate that the lover hopes everything for himself, and it may indicate that the lover lovingly hopes everything for others. But this is after all one and the same; and this obscurity is simply the clarity of the eternal, if one understands that it is absolutely one and the same. If it is love alone which hopes everything (and Paul does not say that hope hopes everything, but that love hopes everything, just because, as he says, love is greater than hope), then it follows as a matter of course (because it is love and because of what love is) that the lover hopes everything for others, since his love is the condition of his hope for himself. Only earthly understanding (and its clarity is not to be recommended), only earthly understanding, which understands neither love nor hope, believes that hoping for one's self and hoping for others are two entirely different things, as well as that love is a third thing in itself. Earthly understanding thinks that a man can just as well hope for himself without hoping for others; and that he does not need love in order to hope for himself, whereas he certainly needs love in order to hope for others, for the beloved; and why should one hope for any others than these? Earthly understanding does not notice that love is by no means a third thing in itself, but it is the middle term: without love no hope for one's self, with love hope for all others; to the same degree as one has hope for one's self, to the same degree one hopes for others, for to that same degree one is loving.

Blessed be the lover, he hopes all things; even in the last moment he hopes the possibility of good for the most perverted. He learned it from eternity; but only because he was the lover could he learn from eternity, and only because he was the lover could he learn this from eternity. Woe to him who with respect to another man gave up hope and possibility, woe to him, for thereby he himself lost love!

Love hopes all things and—is never put to shame. We speak in relation to hope and expectation, about being put to shame; we believe that one is put to shame when his hope or expectation is not fulfilled. In what does the disgrace consist? Certainly it must lie in the fact that one's calculating cleverness has not reckoned correctly, that (to one's shame) it becomes apparent that one has irrationally miscalculated himself. But, good heavens! the disgrace would not be so dangerous; it is after all really so only in the eyes of the world, whose ideas of honor and shame one would still not take pride in appropriating for one's self. For that which the world most admires and alone honors, is shrewdness, or acting cleverly. But to act cleverly is certainly the most contemptible thing of all. If a man is clever, he is in a certain sense not responsible for that; that he develops his cleverness is nothing to be ashamed of; it is rather the more clever. And it is certain (something which particularly needs to be said in these clever times, where cleverness has really

become that which must be overcome by the help of Christianity, as were once ferocity and savagery), if men do not learn to despise acting cleverly as profoundly as they despise stealing or bearing false witness: then one completely does away with the eternal, and along with it everything which is sacred and worthy of honor—for acting cleverly simply consists in employing one's whole life in bearing false witness against the eternal, in stealing existence from God. Acting cleverly is, namely, incompleteness, whereby one undeniably gets farthest in the world, gains worldly goods and advantages, and the world's honor, because the world and worldly advantages are, everlastingly understood, incompleteness. But neither eternity nor the Holy Scriptures have ever taught any man to strive to come far or farthest in the world; on the contrary they warn him not to come too far in the world, in order, if possible, to keep himself pure from the world's pollution. Still, if this is the condition, then it does not seem to be something to recommend to anyone who aspires to getting farthest or far in the world.

If anything can be truly said about being put to shame as regards hope and expectation, the source of the disgrace must lie deeper, must lie in what one hopes, so that one is essentially put to shame equally whether one's hope is fulfilled or not; the difference will only be that when the hope is not fulfilled, perhaps in one's resentment and despair it then becomes evident how firmly one had adhered to that for which it was shameful for him to hope. If hope were fulfilled, this would not perhaps have become apparent, but the disgrace would essentially have been the same.

Still, if one hopes for something for which it is a disgrace to hope, regardless of whether the hope is fulfilled or not, one does not really hope. It is a misuse of the noble word "hope" to juxtapose it with anything like that; for the fact of hoping lays hold essentially and eternally on the good—so one can never be disgraced by hoping.

One may (in order for a moment to use the wrong word) be put to shame through hoping for one or another earthly advantage—if it does not materialize. But the disgrace does not really lie in the fact that it does not happen, that one's hope was unfulfilled, the disgrace consists in its now becoming evident, through one's being disappointed, how important such a worldly advantage would be to one. This is, therefore, not hoping, it is wishing, desiring, expecting; and so one can be made to feel ashamed.—One can be put to shame through giving up hope for another man—if it now appears that he is nevertheless, saved, or perhaps even that his destruction lay in our imagination. In this case one is really put to shame because it is a disgrace to one to give up another man, whatever the outcome is.—One can be put to shame through hoping something evil for a man—if it appears that everything turns out

for the good for him. The vindictive man says sometimes that he hopes to God that vengeance will overtake the one he hates. But truly this is not hoping, but hating; and it is shameless to call it hoping; blasphemous to wish to make God a partner in hating! The vindictive man is not put to shame because things do not turn out as he expected, but he is and would be put to shame regardless of what happens.

The lover, on the contrary, hopes everything, and is never put to shame. The Scriptures speak about a hope which will not be ashamed. Thereby one thinks immediately of the hope which concerns the one who hopes, his hope for the forgiveness of sins, and sometime of becoming eternally happy; his hope for a blessed reunion with those from whom death or life had separated him. And only in relation to this hope, which is hope, could there be any question of being put to shame; for truly it would not be a disgrace to one to have had this hope, but on the contrary, an honor, and hence it might seem that the shame would be in the nonfulfillment of the hope. So consistent is the Scripture usage, it does not call all kinds of expectation, the expectation of the manifold, hope; it knows only one hope, *the hope*, the possibility of the good and of this hope, the only one *which might* be put to shame, because the fact of having it, say the Scriptures, is an honor which shall not be put to shame.

Yet, if the lover's hope is for another man, might it not be possible that the lover would be put to shame—if his hope were not fulfilled? Is it not possible that a man might be eternally lost? But now if the lover had hoped everything, had hoped the possibility of the good for this man, then would he be put to shame through having had this hope?

How! If the prodigal son had died in his sins, and had consequently been laid in his grave with shame—and the father who even in this last moment had hoped all things, stood near: did he stand there disgraced? I thought it was the son who was disgraced, the son who brought shame to the father—but then the father must have honor, for it is impossible to put to shame one who is shamed. Alas, this troubled father was least concerned about the honor; but truly he stood there in honor! If there were on that side of the grave no salvation for the prodigal son, if he were eternally lost—and the father who, as long as he lived, had persisted in hoping all things, even still at the hour of death had hoped all things: would he in eternity be put to shame? In eternity! No, eternity has the conception of eternity about honor and shame; eternity does not even understand, it separates from itself as the dishonored, the clever who will only talk about how far now one's expectation had achieved fulfillment, but who do not consider at all what that expectation was. In eternity everyone will be forced to understand that it is not the outcome which conditions the honor or the shame, but

the expectation itself. In eternity, therefore, it will precisely be the unloving one, who still perhaps was right in what he pettily, enviously, hatefully expected for another man, he will be put to shame although his expectation was fulfilled. But the honor belongs to the lover. And in eternity there will be no busy gossip heard about his having made a mistake—perhaps it would also be a mistake to become eternally happy; no, in eternity there is but one mistake: to be, together with his fulfilled, petty, envious, hateful expectations, excluded from eternal happiness! And in eternity no mockery will wound the lover because he was foolish enough to make himself a laughing-stock through hoping everything; for in eternity the cry of the mocker is not heard, even less than in the grave, because in eternity naught is heard but the voices of the blessed! And in eternity no envy will touch the wreath of honor which the lover bears with honor; no, envy does not reach so far. However far it reaches, it does not reach from hell to Paradise!

IV

LOVE SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN

Love seeketh not its own.—I CORINTHIANS 13:5

NO, love does not seek its own; for seeking its own is precisely selfishness, egotism, self-seeking, or whatever names the uncharitable mind may use to describe it. And yet, is not God love? But He who created man in His image, so that he might resemble Him, might become perfect even as He is perfect, hence, might approach the perfection which is God Himself, might resemble the image which is the image of God: does He not seek His own? Yes, He seeks His own, which is love. He seeks it by giving everything, for God is good, and there is only One who is good, God who gives everything. Or was not Christ love? But He came into the world in order to become a pattern, in order to draw men unto Himself so that they might resemble Him, might in truth become His own: did *He* then not seek His own? Yes, He sought His own by sacrificing Himself for everyone, so that they might resemble Him in His very likeness, in sacrificial devotion. Still, in that sense the seeking His own is something quite different, and by no means what we think of when we speak about seeking one's own or about not seeking one's own. Love is precisely sacrifice; that it seeks love is again the supreme love. That is to say, it is so in the relation between God and man. For when a man seeks another man's love and seeks himself to be loved, then that is not sacrifice, for sacrifice would precisely consist in helping the other man to seek God. Only God is unreservedly able to seek love, and to be Himself the object of that love, yet without seeking His own. But no man *is love*. Therefore if a man seeks to become the object of another man's love, he is seeking his own deliberately and fraudulently; for the only true object of a man's love is "the love" which is God, which therefore in a still more profound sense is not any object, since He Himself is the love.

So let us then, with the act of sacrificial devotion in our thoughts (and it is then really not an act, *not* doing this or that), speak about:

LOVE SEEKETH NOT ITS OWN.

Love seeketh not its own; for in love there is no mine and thine. But "mine" and "thine" are only a determination of the relationship of "own"; if, consequently, there is no "mine" and "thine," then there is no "own"; but if there is no "own" at all, it is impossible to seek one's "own."

Justice is recognizable by the fact that it gives to everyone his own,

just as in turn it demands its own; that is to say, justice goes to law about the "own," weighs and divides; decides what each one has a right to call his own, judges and punishes, if anyone refuses to make the distinction between "mine" and "thine." In this self-willed yet legally justified "mine," the individual has the right to do what he will; and if he does not seek his own in some way other than as justice prescribes, then justice has nothing to reproach him about, and no right to reproach him for anything. So each one is entitled to his own. As soon as he is deprived of his own, or as soon as he deprives another of what belongs to him, then justice steps in, for its duty is to secure the common safety in which everyone is protected in his own rights.

But sometimes something happens, a revolution, a war, an earthquake, or some such terrible catastrophe, and everything is thrown into confusion. Justice tries in vain to secure everyone his own, to maintain the difference between "mine" and "thine"; it cannot do it; in the confusion it cannot hold the balance even, it throws the balance away: it despairs!

Terrible spectacle! And yet, does not love in a certain sense, although in the most blessed way, occasion the same confusion? But love, it too is an event, the greatest of all, the most joyful of all; love is a change, the most remarkable of all, but the most desirable—we are not now speaking in a preferential sense about the fact that one who is affected by love is changed or becomes changed; love is a revolution, the most profound of all, but the most blessed! So then in love there is confusion; in this blessed confusion there is for the lovers no difference between "mine" and "thine." Wonderful! There is a "you" and an "I," and there is no "mine" and "thine"! For without "you" and "I" there is no love, and with "mine" and "thine" there is no love; but "mine" and "thine" (these pronouns of possession) come from "thou" and "I," and hence it seems as if they must be wherever there is "thou" and "I." This is also the case everywhere except in the love which is a fundamental revolution. The more profound the revolution is, the more completely the difference of "mine" and "thine" disappears, the more perfect is the love. Its perfection depends essentially upon its not appearing that concealed at bottom there has lain and lies a difference between "mine" and "thine"; hence it depends essentially upon the completeness of the revolution. The more profound the revolution is, the more justice trembles; the more profound the revolution is, the more perfect is the love.

Does the difference between "mine" and "thine" then absolutely cease in earthly love and friendship? There does take place in love and friendship an overturning of the selfishness which is moved by self-love and by this stubborn "mine" and "thine." The one in love feels beside

himself, outside of the ego, carried forward into that blessed confusion, so that for himself and the beloved, for him and the friend, there is no difference of "mine" and "thine"; "for," says the lover, "everything which is mine is his . . . and what is his is . . . is mine!" How? Has then the difference between "mine" and "thine" ceased? When "mine" has become "thine," and "thine" "mine," then there is everywhere a "mine" and "thine," only that the change which took place indicates and vouches for the fact that it is no longer the first, the immediate "mine" of self-love which stands stubbornly against the "thine." With the exchange the headstrong "mine" and "thine" has become the common "thine" and "mine." There is, consequently, fellowship, perfect fellowship in "mine" and "thine." When "mine" and "thine" exchanged become the "our" in which the determination love and friendship has its strength, they are at least strong in that. But "our" is for fellowship exactly what "mine" is for the individual, and the "our" is formed—not of the obstinate "mine" and "thine," for there can be no union between these, but of the united, the interchanged "thine" and "mine." Therefore we see that love and friendship *as such* are only improved and augmented self-love; while undeniably earthly love is life's most beautiful happiness, and friendship the greatest temporal good! In earthly love and friendship the revolution in self-love is by no means radically deep enough; therefore the obstinate difference between "mine" and "thine" of the primitive selfishness still slumbers within it as a possibility. It is therefore regarded as an entirely significant symbol of love that the lovers exchange rings with each other; truly it is also entirely significant, but a mediocre symbol of love—that they must exchange rings. And an exchange by no means ends the difference of "mine" and "thine," for that for which I exchange mine becomes in turn mine. When friends blend their blood with each other, it is certainly a fundamental exchange, for when the blood is blended a confusion arises: is it my blood which courses through my veins? No, it is my friend's; but then, too, it is also my blood which flows in my friend's veins. That is to say, an "I" is no longer itself the first, but a "you," yet conversely, the case is the same.

How then is the difference "mine" and "thine" completely removed? The difference of "mine" and "thine" is an antithetical relation, they exist only in and with each other; therefore take one difference completely away and the other also completely disappears. Let us first attempt in the difference "mine" and "thine," to take the distinction "thine" completely away. What do we then have? Then we have crimes and offenses against the law; for the thief, the robber, the swindler, the man of violence, in the distinction "mine" and "thine," recognizes nothing, he will not recognize "thine" at all. But just for that reason he also absolutely loses

the distinction of the "mine." Even if he does not himself understand it, even if he hardens himself against understanding it, justice essentially understands that a criminal has really no sense of "mine"; as a criminal he is without this discriminating sense; and in another way: the richer the criminal becomes through the stolen "thine," the less "mine" he has. Now in the difference "mine" and "thine," take away the difference of the "mine" completely, what do we then have? Then we have the self-abnegating, the self-denying, the true love. But again if the category "thine" completely disappears, what is there then for reflection to understand, even if for a moment this seems a bewildering thought? The curse that rests on the criminal is that his "mine" disappears because he has abolished the "thine." The blessing that rests upon true love is that the qualification "thine" is dropped, so that everything becomes the true lover's; as Paul says: "All things are yours," and as the true lover in a certain divine sense says: "All things are mine." And yet, yet this happened only once in that he simply had no "mine"; hence, "All things are mine, I, who have no 'mine' at all." But that all things are his is a divine mystery; for, humanly speaking, the true lover is the sacrificing lover, the self-sacrificing, the absolutely self-denying lover; he is, humanly speaking, the one wronged, wronged most deeply of all, even if he is himself responsible because of his own perpetual sacrifice. He is thus quite exactly the opposite of the criminal who is the offending one.

An earthly lover is not exactly the opposite of the offender, however different he is from him; for an earthly lover still seeks in a certain, frequently unconscious sense his own, and thus he has a "mine." Only in the self-denying love does the category of "mine" completely disappear, and the distinction of "mine" and "thine" become completely abolished. When, namely, I know nothing which is "mine," when nothing at all is "mine," then is everything "thine," which it also is in a certain sense, and thus the sacrificing love thinks of it. Still, everything, unconditionally everything, cannot be "thine," since "thine" is a contrast-relationship, and in "everything" there is no possibility of contrast. Then the miraculous takes place, which is the blessing of heaven upon the self-denying love, that in the mysterious sense of the eternal happiness, everything becomes His, His who had no "mine" at all; His who in self-denial made all "His" into "thine." Since God is, in other words, everything, and just through having no "mine" at all, self-denying love gained God, and gained everything. For he who loses his soul shall gain it; but the discrimination "mine" and "thine," or the "thine" and "mine" of love and of friendship is the preservation of the soul. Only spiritual love has the courage to be willing to have no "mine" at all, courage absolutely to end the difference "mine" and "thine," therefore

it gains God—through losing its soul. Here again is seen what the early Fathers understood, that the virtues of the pagans were glittering vices.

The true lover does not seek his own. He does not understand the strict demands of justice and of equity, not even of fairness, regarding the "own"; nor does he understand an exchange, as earthly love does, which also understands how to guard against being fooled (hence, understands how to guard its "own"); nor does he understand fellowship, as friendship does, which also understands how to see that like is given for like, so that the friendship may be preserved (hence, understands how to guard its own). No, the true lover understands only one thing: to be fooled, to be deceived, to give everything without receiving the least reward—that is what it means not to seek his own. Oh, the poor fool, how ridiculous he is—in the eyes of the world! The true lover is absolutely the injured one—for which in a certain sense he was himself responsible because of his self-denial. Yet it was in this way that the overturning of the "mine" and "thine" reached its highest point, and thereby love also attained its highest happiness in itself. No ingratitude, no envy, no unappreciated sacrifice, no ridicule instead of thanks, nothing either present or future, can earlier or later make him understand that he has any "mine," or make it evident that he nevertheless had forgotten the difference "mine" and "thine" for only a moment; for he has eternally forgotten this difference, and has eternally understood himself in sacrificial love, has understood himself in being sacrificed.

Love seeketh not its own. For the true lover does not love his own characteristics; on the contrary, he loves every man according to his own characteristics; but the phrase "his own characteristics" is exactly the expression for his "own"; hence the lover does not seek his own; just the opposite, he seeks the other's "own."

Let us for a moment look at nature. With what infinite love nature, or God in nature, embraces all the differences there are in life and existence. Recall sometime what you have so often delighted in observing, recall the beauty of your field! There is no, oh, no difference in the love —but in the flowers, what a difference! Even the least, most insignificant, unattractive, poor little flower, overlooked even in its most immediate environment, which you hardly discover unless you are looking particularly for it, it is as if it had also said to the creating love: "Let me be something in myself, something characteristic." And then love had helped it to become its own individuality, but far more beautiful than anything the poor little flower had ever dared to hope. What love! First, it makes no distinctions, none at all; next, which is like the first. it makes infinite differences itself in loving the difference. Wonderful love! For what is so difficult as in loving not to make any distinctions;

and if one simply makes no distinction, what then is so difficult as to make distinctions! Imagine then that nature was as men are, severe, domineering, cold, partial, petty, capricious—and imagine, aye, just imagine, what might then happen to the beauty of the fields!

So, too, with respect to the love between men, only the true love loves every man according to his own characteristics. The *strict, the domineering* man lacks flexibility, and he lacks adaptability in understanding others; he demands his "own" from everyone, wishes that everyone might be remodeled to resemble himself, might be pruned according to his knack for training men. Or he does what he regards as manifesting a rare degree of love; for once he makes a single exception, he tries, so he says, to understand a single man, that is, he considers, in a quite definite and particular—and arbitrary manner, something definite for this man, and now demands that this other man shall carry out this idea. Whether it is consistent with the other man's individuality or not, has nothing to do with the case, for it is what the domineering man has planned for him. If the strong, imperious man is not allowed to create, then he at least wishes to remodel, that is, he seeks his "own," so that everywhere he points he will be able to say: "See that, that is my own idea; I thought of that, that is the way I wanted it." Whether the arrogant and imperious man is referring to some big thing or a small one, whether he tyrannically rules over an empire, or is a domestic tyrant in an attic, makes no essential difference; his nature is the same: imperiously not to be able to forget himself, imperiously to wish to crush the other man's individuality, or make his life miserable for him. The nature is the same—the greatest tyrant who has ever lived, and who had a world to tyrannize over, finally became weary of it, and ended by torturing flies, but truly his nature remained the same!

And as the strict imperious arrogance only seeks its own, so, too, does *petty-mindedness*, the enviously-imperious, the cowardly-timorous pettiness. What is pettiness? Is pettiness a natural characteristic, that is, is any man originating from the hand of God, born petty? No! Pettiness is creation's own wretched invention, when, neither truly proud nor truly humble (for humility before God is the true pride), it creates itself, and also distorts God, as if He too were petty, as if He could not bear individuality—He, who lovingly gives *everything*, and yet, yet, gives everything individuality. Pettiness must therefore not be confused with humble gifts or with what we narrow-mindedly enough call the insignificant. Imagine such an insignificant man—if he has the courage to be himself before God, then he has individuality; but truly such an insignificant man, yet what am I saying, no, such a noble man, is never petty-minded. One should guard against this mistake; and so one

should not confuse a simple, noble simplicity, which does not understand much, with a narrow-minded stupidity which cowardly and stubbornly only wishes to understand its "own." The narrow-minded man never has had the courage for this divinely pleasing venture of humility and pride: being one's self *before God*—for the emphasis rests on "before God," since He is the origin and well-spring of all individuality.

He who dares to do this, has individuality; he has learned to know what God had already given him; and he believes in entirely the same sense in the individuality of every man. To have individuality is to believe in the individuality of everyone else; for the individuality is not "mine," it is the gift of God through which He permits *me* to be, and through which He permits *everyone* to be. This is just the unfathomable wealth of goodness in God's goodness that He, the *Almighty*, still gives in such a way that the receiver is given individuality; that He who creates from nothing yet creates individuality, so that the creature, as over against Him, the Creator, does not become nothing, although he is taken from nothing and is nothing, but becomes an individuality. Pettiness, on the contrary, which is an *assumed nature*, has no individuality, that is, it has not believed in its "own" individuality, therefore it cannot believe in that of anyone else.

Pettiness has clung firmly to a definitely fixed shape and form which it calls its own; it seeks only that, can love only that. If the petty-minded man can find this, then he loves it. So petty-mindedness sticks with petty-mindedness, they grow into each other, which spiritually understood is just as pernicious as an ingrowing nail. This petty union is regarded then as the highest type of love, as the true friendship, as the truly loyal, sincere unanimity. The petty-minded man does not wish to understand that the more he lays hold on this pettiness, the farther away he is from true love, the greater becomes the falsity of the petty-mindedness—and it is worse, moreover, if he takes advantage of God's name, and uses it to his own profit, presumably so that petty-mindedness will be the only object of God's love, the only one in which He has pleasure. This petty connection is then equally petty in both directions: equally petty in idolizing some particular man who is of its "own" kind, perhaps its inventor, or yet one who from the least trial up to the least pettiness proves to have absolutely the countenance, demeanor, voice, thought-processes, manner of speech and cordiality of pettiness; and equally petty in wishing to supplant everything else. Just because pettiness is an assumed nature, and hence untruth; just because it has never fundamentally and frankly laid hold on God, but has petty-mindedly bungled its own affairs and falsified God; just because of these it has a bad conscience.

To the one who has individuality no strange individuality is a refutation, it is rather a confirmation, or a further proof; for it cannot disturb him that it appears, as he believes, that everyone has individuality. But to pettiness every individuality is a refutation; that is why the petty-minded man feels a clammy, uncomfortable uneasiness on seeing a strange individuality, and nothing else is so important as to get rid of it. Petty-mindedness demands, as it were, of God that every such individuality be destroyed, so that it may appear that petty-mindedness is right, and that God is a jealous God—petty-mindedly jealous. It may sometimes serve as an excuse that petty-mindedness really imagines that its wretched invention is true, consequently it is a proof of sincere friendship and true sympathy to wish to bungle everything and make everyone into a resemblance of itself. When this is so, petty-mindedness is generally free in the use of hearty words and assurances. But it really is, what is not usually mentioned, a self-defense, an instinct for self-preservation, which makes petty-mindedness eager to do away with everything except its own. One hears it in its asthmatic breathing, which gasps for air, how it will perish if it does not get rid of this discomfort, this apprehensiveness; one sees it in its glance, how uncertain of itself it is deep within itself, and therefore how craftily and also how rapaciously it lies in wait for its prey: so that it may prove that petty-mindedness is right and is the victor. As one who in peril of life permits everything because it is a matter of life and death, so does petty-mindedness act in the same way; it is only natural that all the means it uses to defend its life and to deprive the individuality of life, should naturally be extremely petty; for although it permits everything, you may be sure that the everything it permits is everything petty.

"But do not earthly love and friendship love the beloved or the friend for his personal characteristics?" Yes, that is true, and yet it is not always absolutely true; for earthly love and friendship have their limitations, they can surrender everything to the other's personality but not love and friendship itself to the other's personality. Suppose now that the other's personality demanded just this sacrifice! Suppose the lover saw, to his delight, that he was loved, but also saw that it would be very detrimental to the beloved's individuality, would mean his ruin, however much he desired it: aye, then the earthly love, as such, is not able to make this sacrifice. Or suppose that the beloved saw that such a relationship would be the ruin of the lover, would completely upset his personality: aye, then earthly love, as such, has not the strength to make this sacrifice.

But the true love, the sacrificing love, which loves every man for his

own characteristics, is willing to make every sacrifice: for it does not seek its own.

Love seeketh not its own; for it choses rather to give so that the gift looks as if the gift were the recipient's own possession.

When in our civic relationships we speak about men's circumstances, we make a distinction between those who are their own masters and those who are dependent, and we wish for everyone that he might sometime be able to become his own, as we say. But in the world of the spirit, too, the being one's own is highest—and affectionately to help someone to become himself free, independent, his own, to help him to stand alone: that is the greatest benefit one man can confer upon another. What consequently is the greatest benefaction? It is in truth the one we have mentioned, that is, please notice, if the lover also knows how to make himself inconspicuous, so that the one he helped does not become dependent on him—through being indebted to him for the greatest of all benefits. That is to say, the test of the greatest benefit is simply: *the manner* in which the only true benefit is conferred. Essentially it can be conferred in but one way, even if in another sense, there are many ways; when the benefaction is not conferred in this way, it is very far from being a benefaction. So one cannot say directly what the greatest benefaction is, since the greatest benefaction, that of helping another man to be independent, cannot be done in a direct manner.

Let us try to understand this. When I say, "This man stands only through my help," and what I say is true: have I then done the highest possible for him? Let us see! What do I mean by that? I say, "He stands only and alone by my help"—but then he does not stand alone, then he has not become his own, then it is to my help that he owes all this—and he is conscious of that fact. To help a man in this manner is really to deceive him. And yet this is the way in which the greatest benefactions in the world are, as often as not, conferred, that is, in a way in which they cannot be conferred; and yet it is the way which the world particularly appreciates—which is natural, for the true way of conferring a benefit makes itself invisible, hence is not seen, and thus, the world, as it were, exempts those concerned from all dependence. But the one who is aided in the wrong way, the meaningless way, he is inexhaustible in his praise and gratitude to me as his greatest benefactor (because he now stands alone by the aid of a dependent relation to me); he and his family and all his connections honor and praise me as his greatest benefactor, because I have affectionately made him dependent on me, or—yes, it is strange, he expresses his gratitude in an absolutely meaningless way, for instead of saying that I have made him dependent on me, he says that I have helped him to stand alone.

Hence the greatest benefit cannot be bestowed in such a way that

the recipient comes to realize that he owes it to me; for if he learns to know that, then it simply is not the greatest of benefactions. If, on the other hand, someone says, "This man stands alone—through my assistance," and what he says is true: aye, then he has done for this man the most that one man can do for another, he has made him free, independent, a self, an ego, and just through concealing his aid, has helped him to stand alone. Consequently, to stand alone—by another's aid! You know there are many authors who use dashes on every occasion to conceal their lack of thought; and there are also others who use dashes with insight and propriety: but truly a dash is never used more significantly than in this little sentence—where it is used by one who, it is well to note, has perfected its use, if such a thing is possible; for in this little sentence the thought of the infinite is contained in the most ingenious manner, the greatest contrast is overcome. He stands alone—that is the most important thing; he stands alone—you see nothing more; you do not see the assistance or support, no awkward bungler's hand holding him up, any more than it occurs to him that anyone has helped him; no, he stands alone—by another's help. But this other's help is hidden, concealed from him—from the one helped? No, from him, from the eyes of the independent man (for if he knows that he has been helped, then he is not in the most profound sense the independent one who helps and has helped himself), that other's help is hidden behind the dash.

There is a noble wisdom which yet in a good sense is also infinitely cunning and subtle. It is well known; were I to mention the strange word by which it is called, there would hardly be anyone in these times who was not acquainted with it—by name: still, perhaps there are not so many who would recognize it if one were to describe it without mentioning its name. It and its name are often blamed in the world; and yet even this is not so strange, for the world is a very confused thinker who because of mere thoughts has neither time nor patience to think one thought. That noble, simple, wise man of old, he was the master of this wisdom, and truly this noble man was still not just a bad or evil man; he was also, if I may express myself a little whimsically, he was, and that one cannot deny him, he was a kind of thinker, even if not as profound as modern thinkers in their modes of thought and expression, even if not so worthy of admiration as being able to explain—for he was never able to explain more than what he understood.

This noble wag had profoundly understood that the most one man can do for another is to set him free, to help him to stand alone—and he had also understood himself in understanding that, that is, he had understood that if this is to be done, then the one who helps must be

able to conceal himself, must magnanimously be willing to annihilate himself. He was, as he also called himself, in the spiritual sense a midwife, and he labored disinterestedly in this service, making every sacrifice—for this disinterestedness lay in the fact that it was concealed from the one helped, both the how and the fact that he was helped; the disinterestedness lay in the fact that the world could not understand, and hence could not appreciate his disinterestedness, something it is never able to do, for it simply cannot understand why one does not wish to be considered interested; on the other hand, why an interested party even more interestedly might wish to be regarded as disinterested.

In this understanding about helping another man, the true lover and that noble wag are in agreement. The latter knows in himself, and it is true that he has done the other man the greatest service possible; he knows himself how he has worked for this, what time and industry and art it has cost him to inveigle the other man into an admission of the truth; how much misunderstanding he has had to endure from the one he helped by depriving him of his folly and cleverly leading him to the acquiring of the truth. For the art of divesting a man of his folly is a dangerous one to practice; that noble wise man himself says "that men became so angry with him that they were sometimes ready to bite him, every time he took away a stupid idea from them"—for they regarded as love that which confirmed them in their folly. What wonder then that they were angry at anyone who wished to take that, their choicest treasure, away from them! Thus he labored; and when the work was finished he said quite softly to himself: "Now this man stands alone." But thereby we come to the dash; and with the dash a smile comes upon the lips of this man, so noble and yet so mischievous, and he says, "Now this man stands alone—by my help"; he reserves for himself the secret of this inscrutable smile. Truly there is no trace of malice in this smile; he himself knows that what he has done is well-intentioned, that it is in truth a benefaction, and in truth the only way in which it could be done: but the smile, that is, however, the self-conscious smile of ingenuity.

It is otherwise with the lover. He too says: "Now this man stands alone." Then comes the dash. Oh, but this dash signifies for the lover something other than a smile; for however noble and magnanimous and disinterested that wise rogue was, he still did not love the one he wished to help with a true sense of concern. While then by means of the cunning of the dash, that wag accomplishes this task with infinite ease, and this is precisely his art, that he was able to do everything for the other man, and still let it seem as if he had done nothing: so, too, for the lover, although in the thoughtful sense the dash is infinitely easy, in another sense (it is well to notice there is nothing to notice) it is

like a labored breathing, almost like a deep sigh. For in this dash is concealed the sleepless anxiety, the toilsome night watches, the almost desperate exertion; in this dash is concealed a fear and trembling which, and for that reason more terribly, has never found expression. The lover has understood that in truth the greatest, the only benefit that one man can bestow upon another, is to help him to stand alone, to become himself, to be his own; but he has also understood the danger and suffering involved in the passionate labor, and above all, the terrible responsibility. Therefore in gratitude to God he says: "Now this man stands alone—by my help." But there is no self-satisfaction in this last phrase; for the lover has understood that every man essentially stands alone—by the help of God, and that the lover's self-annihilation is merely so that he may not hinder the other man's God-relationship; so that all the lover's help infinitely disappears in the God-relationship. He works without reward; for he makes himself into nothing, and just at the moment when some mention might be made of it, so that he could retain a proud self-consciousness as a reward of his labor, God steps in, and he is again annihilated, which nevertheless makes for his eternal happiness.

Suppose a courtier had it in his power to make himself important to someone to whom an audience with his majesty was of extreme importance. But now, if we can imagine such a situation, suppose the courtier, by putting himself to one side, were able to secure this audience at any time for the one seeking it: I wonder, then, if the suppliant, in his joy at having received an audience, would entirely forget the poor courtier; the poor courtier, who had had it in his power, *unkindly*, sometimes to secure an audience with his majesty for the seeker, had had the power to put him under particular obligations, to make himself loved for his love; the poor courtier, who instead of doing this had *lovingly* chosen to set himself to one side, and just by so doing, to pave the way for the suppliant at any time to secure an audience with his majesty, to help the seeker to the independence which at any time is permitted access to his majesty!

This is the way with all the lover's work. Truly he does not seek his own, for he gives precisely in such a way that it looks as if the gift had been the recipient's possession. So far as the lover may, he seeks to help a man to become himself, to become his own. But in this way there is simply nothing changed in existence, except that the lover, the concealed benefactor, is thrust outside, since it is every man's destiny to be free, to be independent, to be himself. If the lover in this respect has been a fellow-laborer with God, everything has still become—like the fulfillment of the destiny. If it is noticed that the lover has helped,

then the relationship becomes confused, or then the helper has not helped lovingly, the lover has not helped in the right way.

Wonderful memory, which the lover acquires as thanks for his labor! He can in a manner of speaking, pack his whole life into a dash. He can say: "I have labored in spite of everyone, early and late, but what have I accomplished—a dash! (If what he had accomplished could be directly seen, then he would have worked less lovingly.) I have suffered as severely as any man, inwardly as only love can suffer; but what have I gained—a dash! I have proclaimed the truth clearly and thoughtfully in spite of everyone; but who has appropriated it—a dash!" Had he, namely, not been the lover, then would he, certainly less thoughtfully, plainly have shouted forth the truth, and then he would have had disciples at once, who would have appropriated the truth—and hailed him as master.

Is the lover's life then wasted, has he absolutely lived in vain, since there is nothing, nothing at all, which witnesses to his work and striving? Answer: is, then, not to seek his own, is that to waste his life? No, truly, this life is not wasted; the lover knows that in his blessed joy in himself and with God. His life is in a certain sense quite wasted on existence, on the existence of others; without wishing to waste any time or strength in asserting himself, in being something for himself, he is in his self-sacrifice willing to perish, that is, he is wholly transformed into being merely an active power in the hand of God. Therefore his work cannot be made visible. His work consists simply in helping another man or other men, to become their own, which in a certain sense they were before. But when one *actually* has by another's help become his own, then it is absolutely impossible to see that it is by another's help; for if I see the other's help, then I see, too, that the one helped did not become his own.

V

LOVE COVERETH A MULTITUDE OF SINS

THE temporal has three times, and therefore it never really absolutely exists, or absolutely in any one of them. The eternal *is*. A temporal object can have many different attributes, and in a certain sense can be said to have them all at one time, insofar as it is what it is in these definite attributes. But duplication in itself never has a temporal object; as the temporal disappears in time, so too it exists only in its attributes. On the contrary, when the eternal is present in a man, then this eternal so reduplicates itself in him, that every moment it is present in him, it is present in a twofold manner: in an outward direction, and in an inward direction back into itself, but in such a way that this is one and the same thing; for otherwise it is not duplication. The eternal is not merely in its own attributes, but is in itself in its attributes; it not only has attributes, but is in itself when it has attributes.

So now with love. What love does, that it is; what it is, that it does—and at one and the same time: at the very moment it goes out of itself (the direction outward) it is in itself (the direction inward); and at the very moment it is in itself, it thereby goes out of itself, so that this outgoing and this return, this return and this outgoing, are simultaneously one and the same.

When we say that "Love gives fearlessness," we mean by that, that the lover by his very nature makes others fearless; everywhere where love is present, it spreads fearlessness; one freely approaches the lover, for he drives out fear. Whereas the suspicious man frightens everyone away from him, whereas the cunning and the crafty spread fear and painful unrest about them, whereas the presence of the tyrant oppresses like the heavy pressure of sultry air: love gives fearlessness. But when we say that "love gives fearlessness," we also say at the same time, something else, that the lover has fearlessness, just as it is said that love gives boldness on the day of judgment, that is, it makes the lover fearless in the judgment.

When we say, "Love saves from death," it is precisely a duplication of the thought: the lover saves another man from death, and he saves, either in absolutely the same or yet in another sense, himself from death; he does it at one and the same time, it is one and the same thing; he does not save the other at one moment and himself the next, but at the very moment that he saves the other, he saves himself from death. Only love never thinks about the latter, about saving himself, about himself acquiring fearlessness; the lover in his love thinks only about giving fearlessness and saving another from death. Yet the lover is not therefore forgotten. No, the one who lovingly forgets himself, forgets his own suffering to consider another's, forgets all his own wretched-

ness in order to think of another's misery, forgets what he himself loses in order lovingly to consider another's loss, forgets his own advantage in order lovingly to look at another's: truly such a one is not forgotten. There is One who considers him: God in heaven; or love considers him. God is love, and when a man from love forgets himself, how then could God forget him! No, while the lover forgets himself and thinks of the other man, God thinks of the lover. The self-lover is busy, he shrieks and shouts, and stands for his rights in order to make certain of not being forgotten—and yet he is forgotten; but the lover who forgets himself, he is remembered by love. There is One who thinks of him, and thereby it comes to pass that the lover gets what he gives.

Look at the duplication: what the lover does, that he is, or he becomes that; what he gives, that he has, or he gets it—wonderful, as that "out of the eater came forth meat." Still, perhaps someone says, "It is not so wonderful that the lover has what he gives, that is always the case; what one does not have, one cannot give." Oh, well, but is it then also always the case that one keeps what one gives, or that one gets that which one gives to another; that just by giving one gets, and gets exactly the same one gives, so that the thing given and the thing received are one and the same? Ordinarily this is probably not the case, but, on the contrary, what I give the other gets, not that I myself get that which I give to another.

So love is always duplicated in itself. This holds true, too, when it is said that love covers a multitude of sins.

In the Scriptures we read that which is "love's" own word, that many sins were forgiven to the one who loved much—because the love in him conceals the multitude of sins. However, we shall not speak about that at this time. In this little essay we are constantly discussing the works of love, consequently we are looking at love directed outward. With this meaning in mind, we shall now speak about:

LOVE COVERETH A MULTITUDE OF SINS.

Love covers a multitude of sins. For it does not discover the sins; but the fact that it does not discover what still must exist, insofar as they can be discovered, that is hiding them.

The concept "multiplicity" is in itself indefinite. Thus we speak about all the multiplicity of creation, yet this same word signifies something very different, depending on who is speaking. A man who has spent his entire life in an out-of-the-way place, and has therefore acquired little taste for studying nature: how little does he know, and yet he speaks about the multiplicity of creation! A naturalist, however, who has traveled around the world, who has been almost everywhere, both above

and beneath the surface of the earth, who has seen the much that he has seen; who has by the use of the telescope sometimes discovered otherwise invisible stars, sometimes by the use of the microscope has discovered otherwise invisible insects: what an astonishing variety he knows, yet he uses the same word, "the multiplicity of creation." And further; while the naturalist rejoices at what he succeeded in seeing, he readily admits that there is no limit to discoveries, since there is no limit to the invention of instruments used in making these discoveries. Consequently the multiplicity of creation, with new instruments constantly being invented, becomes greater and greater, and can always appear to increase—while it still, all things considered, is comprehended in the phrase, "multiplicity of creation." The same holds true about the multitude of sins, in that the word may signify very different things, depending on who the speaker is.

Consequently one *discovers* that the multitude of sins is constantly increasing; that is, through their discovery, it constantly seems to be increasing, naturally also by the help of the discoveries one makes about how cunningly, how suspiciously one acts in order to make discoveries. He who *makes no discoveries*, consequently hides the multitude of sins, for to him the multitude is less.

But discovery is something praiseworthy, something admirable, even if this admiration is sometimes forced to bring the heterogeneous together in a strange way; for one admires the naturalist who discovers a bird, but one also admires the dog that discovered purple. Still, we shall let this pass for what it is worth, but it is certain that the world admires and praises discoveries. And on the other hand one who makes no discoveries, or as good as none, is rated very low. We readily say about someone, in order to brand as an eccentric one who is wrapped up in his own thoughts, "He really does not discover anything." And if we wish to designate one as being especially limited and stupid, we say, "He will certainly never invent gunpowder!"—which certainly is not necessary in our time, since it has already been invented; so it would be an even more questionable matter if someone in our time were to think that he was the one who invented it. Oh, but the fact of having made some discovery is so admired by the world that one cannot forget the enviable lot: of the one who discovered gunpowder!

Of course it is easy to see that the lover who discovers nothing looks very mediocre in the eyes of the world. For even in regard to evil, in regard to sin and the multiplicity of sin, one discovers that there is the smooth, cunning, obtrusive, perhaps half-corrupt observer, who really can make discoveries: that is highly regarded in the world. Even the youth the very moment that he steps out into life (for he would certainly object to having the world call him a fool) is most willing to

disclose how he knows and has discovered evil. Even a woman in her earliest youth (for she would then object to having the world call her a little goose, or a rustic innocent), will readily disclose that she is vain of being a judge of character, naturally in the direction of evil. Moreover, it is incredible how the world has changed in comparison with old times: then there were some few who knew themselves; now all men are judges of character. And this is the curious thing; if someone had discovered how fundamentally humane almost every man is, he would scarcely dare to make his discovery known for fear of being laughed at; perhaps he might even fear that the community would feel insulted at the idea. On the other hand, if someone pretends that he has discovered how fundamentally paltry every man is, how envious, how selfish, how faithless, what abominations can dwell secretly in even the purest, that is, in the one who is regarded by fools and geese and rustic innocents as the purest: then he knows vaingloriously that he is welcome, that the world is longing to hear the results of his observations, his research, his stories. Thus have sin and evil acquired a greater power over men than one ordinarily imagines: it is so silly to be good, so intellectually stupid to believe the good, so provincial to betray ignorance, or that one is not an initiate—an initiate into the most intimate mysteries of sin.

Here we see very clearly how evil and sin in a great measure are the consequence of a vainglorious comparison of one's self with the world and with other men. For one can be quite certain that the same men, just because they vaingloriously fear the judgment of the world, strive in their intercourse with others to be agreeable and interesting by betraying a sophisticated knowledge of evil. One can be quite certain that those same men, when they are alone in quiet meditation, where they do not need to be ashamed of the good, hold a very different view. But in intercourse with others, in society, when one is with many or at least a few, and hence where the company affords a comparison, a comparison-relation, of which vanity cannot possibly remain unconscious: each one tempts the other to disclose what he has discovered.

Yet there are times when even the absolutely worldly-minded man makes an exception, sometimes judges a little more leniently the one who discovers nothing. Suppose that two shrewd men of affairs had some decision to make to which they did not wish to have witnesses, but they were unable to arrange it otherwise, so that their conference must take place in a room where a third party was present—and this third party, as they knew, was very much in love, happy in the first days of love: is it not true that one of the businessmen might say to the other, "Well, it doesn't matter if he is present, he won't hear anything"? They would say it with a smile, and by this smile they would pay tribute to their

own astuteness; but they would still have a kind of respect for the lover who discovers nothing.

And now the lover! For whether the world laughs at him, whether it ridicules him, whether it pities him, or whatever the world says about him, it is certain that concerning the multitude of sins, he *discovers* nothing, not even this laughter, this ridicule, this pity; he *discovers* nothing, and he sees but very little. He discovers nothing; we here make a difference between discovering as a conscious act, as a deliberate attempt to find out something, and the involuntary seeing or hearing something. He discovers nothing. And yet, whether one laughs at him or not, whether or not one ridicules him: fundamentally one has an inward respect for him, because resting in, engrossed in his love he discovers nothing.

The lover discovers nothing, hence he conceals the multitude of sins which would be exposed through the discovery. The life of the lover is an expression of the apostolic precept of being a child in malice. That which the world really admires as shrewdness is an understanding of evil—wisdom is essentially the understanding of the good. The lover has no understanding of evil and does not wish to have; he is and remains, he wishes to be and to continue to be in this respect a child. Place a child in a den of thieves (but the child must not remain there so long that it becomes itself perverted), hence let it remain there only a very short time; then let it come home and tell of all its experiences: you will see that the child, who (like every child) is a good observer and has an excellent memory, will tell everything with the utmost detail, yet in such a way that in a sense the most important things are omitted, so that one who did not know that the child had been among bandits, would least suspect it from the child's narrative. What is it then which the child omits? What is it that the child did not discover? It is the evil. And yet the child's description of what it saw and heard is absolutely accurate. What is it then the child lacks? What is it that so frequently makes a child's narration the most profound mockery of its elders? It is the sense of evil, and that the child lacks the sense of evil, so that the child finds no pleasure in wishing to understand it. Herein the lover resembles the child. But as a basis of all *understanding* there must first and foremost be an *understanding* between the one who will understand and the thing which shall be understood. Therefore, too, the understanding of evil (however much it wishes to delude itself and others into thinking that it can preserve its purity, that it has a pure understanding of evil) is still in *understanding* with the evil; if this understanding did not exist, if the intelligent man did not take pleasure in understanding it, then he would abominate the understanding of it, would prefer not to understand it. Even if this sense of evil indicates

nothing else, it is still a dangerous curiosity about evil; or it is a cunning search for an excuse for its own fault in spreading evil by the aid of knowledge; or it is the false reckoning which exaggerates a man's feeling of importance by the help of his knowledge about another man's corruption.

But let one set a strict guard upon himself; for if out of curiosity one offers evil the little finger, it soon takes the whole hand. And it is most dangerous of all to have ready a stock of excuses; and to become better, or to seem to be better, through comparison with the badness of others, is to become better in a bad way. However, if even this understanding discovers the multitude of sins, what discoveries must not the even more confidential understanding, which is really in a covenant with evil, be able to make! As the jaundiced see everything as yellow, so such a man discovers, as he sinks deeper and deeper, an increasing manifold of sin about him. His eye is alert and trained, not for the understanding of truth, hence for untruth; consequently his sight is prejudiced more and more, so that increasingly defiled, he sees evil in everything, impurity even in what is purest—and this sight (O terrible thought!) is still to him a kind of consolation, for it is important to him to discover as boundless a multitude as possible. At last there are no limits to his discovery; for now he discovers sin even where he himself knows that there is none; he discovers it by the help of backbiting, slander, the fabrication of lies, in which he has trained himself so long that he at last believes it. Such a man has discovered the multitude of sins!

But the lover discovers nothing. There is something so infinitely solemn and yet also so childlike, something which recalls a childish game, when the lover by discovering nothing at all, hides the multitude of sins; something that recalls a childish game; for that is the way we play with a child. We play that we cannot see the child who is standing in front of us, or the child plays that it cannot see us, and this the child finds indescribably amusing. The childlikeness here is that the lover, as in the game, with his eyes wide open, cannot see what is happening just in front of him; the solemnity consists in the fact that it is the evil which he cannot see. We all know that orientals honor a demented person, but this lover, who is worthy of honor, is, as it were, a demented person. We all know that in the old times they made, and rightly, a great distinction between the two kinds of madness, one was a distressing sickness, and one bemoaned such a misfortune; the other was called a divine madness. If we may for once be excused for using the pagan word "divine": it is a divine kind of madness, lovingly not to be able to see the evil which lies just in front of one. Truly, it is really necessary in these clever times, which have so much understanding of

evil, that we should make some effort to learn to honor this madness; for unfortunately it is all too frequent in these times that such a lover, who has a great understanding of the good but does not wish to understand the evil, is looked upon as a madman.

Imagine, to mention the supreme example, imagine Christ at the moment when He was silent before the Counsel; imagine the infuriated mob, imagine the group of dignitaries—and then imagine how many a glance they directed towards Him, their eyes upon Him, only waiting for Him to look at them so that their glance might convey their mockery, their contempt, their pity, their insults, to the accused! But He discovered nothing; lovingly He concealed the multitude of their sins. Imagine how many an abusive epithet, how many insults, how many taunts were shouted at Him—and each participant was so terribly insistent that his voice should be heard, so that, above all, it might not seem that he had been so indescribably stupid as to have missed the opportunity, as not to have been there participating in common with everyone else, hence as the true instrument of public opinion, in insulting, in injuring, in mistreating an innocent man! But He discovered nothing; lovingly He hid the multitude of their sins—by discovering nothing.

And He is the pattern; the lover has learned from Him, when he discovers nothing and thereby hides the multitude of sins, when like a worthy disciple, "forsaken, hated, bearing his cross," he walks between mockery and pity, between insults and lamentations, and yet lovingly discovers nothing—in truth more wonderful than when the three men walked unscathed in the fiery furnace. Still, ridicule and insults really do no harm, if the one insulted does not harm himself by *discovering* them, that is, by becoming resentful. For if he is resentful he discovers the multitude of sins. If you really wish to illustrate more clearly how the lover by discovering nothing hides the multitude of sins, then sometime do away with love. Imagine that the lover had a wife who loved him. Therefore, just because she loved him, she would discover how many sinned against him; she would, affronted, with resentment in her soul, discover every mocking glance; with bruised heart she would hear the insults—whereas he, the lover, would discover nothing. And when the lover, insofar as he could not avoid seeing and hearing some things, would still have the excuse ready for the aggressor, that he himself was at fault: then his wife would not be able to discover any fault in him, but only the more, how many had sinned against him. Do you see now, as you consider what his wife and with truth discovered, do you see how true it is that the lover who discovers nothing, hides a multitude of sins? Imagine this applied to all the rela-

tionships of life, and you will admit that the lover really hides a multitude of sins.

Love covers a multitude of sins; for what it cannot avoid seeing or hearing, it hides by keeping silent, by a lenient explanation, by forgiveness.

Through *silence* it hides the multitude of sins.

It is sometimes the case that two lovers wish to keep their relationship secret. Suppose now that at the moment they confessed their love for each other and promised each other secrecy, there happened quite accidentally to be a third party present, but this intruder was an honest and kindly man who could be relied on, and that he pledged them his silence: would not the love of the two be concealed and continue to be so? But this is the way the lover behaves when he inadvertently, quite accidentally, never because he has tried to, becomes cognizant of a man's sin, of his fault, of how he had offended, or how he had been overtaken in a fault: the lover keeps silent, and hides a multitude of sins.

Say not that "the multitude of sins still remains equally great whether one keeps silent or tells about them, since the silence certainly does not take them away merely because no one mentions them"; rather answer the question: "Does not the one who discloses his neighbor's faults and sins, increase the multitude of sins?" Even if it be true that the multitude of sins remains equally great whether I keep silent about them or not, when I keep silent, I am still doing my part to conceal them. And, furthermore, do we not say that rumor really increases them? We mean thereby that rumor makes the guilt greater than it actually is. Still, I am not thinking of this now. It is in quite a different sense that we may say that the rumor which tells of the neighbor's fault, increases the multitude of sins. Let one not take too thoughtlessly the knowledge of a neighbor's faults, as if it were quite proper if it was once decided that what was said was true. Truly not every witness as to what is true concerning a neighbor's faults, is therefore without guilt; and just through being made a witness to a neighbor's fault, one may easily himself become guilty. So rumor grows, or the one who tells of his neighbor's fault, increases the multitude of sins. The fact that men through rumor, through village gossip, are accustomed inquisitively, frivolously, enviously, maliciously perhaps, to learn of their neighbor's faults, that is debasing to men. It would certainly be desirable if men once more learned how to be silent. But if there must be talk, and consequently inquisitive and frivolous talk, then let it be about stuff and nonsense—the neighbor's fault is and ought to be too serious a matter; inquisitively, frivolously, enviously, to talk about that is, therefore, a sign of depravity. But he who, by telling of his neigh-

bor's faults, helps to pervert men, he increases the multitude of sins.

It is unfortunately only too certain that every man has a strong propensity for seeing his neighbor's faults, and perhaps for making them even greater in telling about them. If there were nothing more to this (alas, but there is) than, to use the mildest expression possible, a kind of nervousness which makes one so weak in this temptation, in this excitement of being able to tell something bad about one's neighbor, in securing to one's self for a moment breathless attention by the help of such an interesting story! But that which is already pernicious enough as a nervous desire which cannot keep silent, is sometimes in a man a horrible, devilish passion developed on the most terrible scale. Is any robber, any thief, any bandit, in short, any criminal, at bottom so depraved as the man who has made it his task, his despicable occupation, on the greatest possible scale, more vociferously than any word of truth ever sounds, extending far over the whole land as anything profitable rarely does, intruding into every corner where the word of God scarcely enters, to proclaim his neighbor's fault, his neighbor's weaknesses, his neighbor's sins; to obtrude on everyone, even the most unstable youth, this defiling knowledge—is there really any criminal so fundamentally depraved as such a man, even if it were so, even if the evil he told about were true! Even if it were so; but it is inconceivable that one who had the earnestness of eternity could be strict in verifying that the evil he described was unconditionally true, and so could be willing to sacrifice his life in this—abhorrent service of truth: the telling of evil. In our prayers to God we pray that God will not lead us into temptation; but if it should happen, and if it should happen that I fell into temptation—merciful God, yet one favor, that my sin and my guilt might be such as the world rightly regards as abominable and rebellious! The most terrible thing of all must still be to incarnate guilt, heaven-crying guilt, to incarnate guilt and again guilt and new guilt day in and day out—and simply not notice it, because one's whole environment, because existence itself, had changed into an illusion, which confirmed one in thinking that it was nothing, that it not only was not guilt, but that it was almost meritorious!

Oh, there are criminals whom the world does not call criminals, whom it rewards and almost honors—and yet, yet would I rather, which God forbid! but I would rather enter into eternity with three repented-of murders on my conscience than as a worn-out slanderer with this horrible, interminable burden of offense, which had been accumulating year after year, which had been spreading itself to an almost inconceivable degree, which had laid men in the grave, embittered the most intimate relationships, injured the most innocent compassion, defiled youth, led astray and perverted both old and young, in short, extended

itself on a scale which even the most vivid imagination can form no conception of—this horrible burden of offense, which I still had never found time to begin to repent of, because the time must be used in committing new offenses, and because the infinitude of the offenses had secured me wealth, influence, everything but esteem and, above all, an enjoyable life!

We still make a difference, with respect to incendiarism, whether the one who sets fire to a house, knows that it is occupied by a number of people or that it is vacant: but through scandal to set, as it were, a whole community on fire, that is not even regarded as a crime. We still quarantine against the plague—but that plague, which is worse than the oriental pestilence, the slander which perverts the soul and mind, that we open our house to, we pay money in order to be defiled, we greet as a welcome guest that which brings defilement!

Say, then, whether it is not true, that the lover by keeping silent about his neighbor's faults hides a multitude of sins, when you consider how by telling them, one increases them.

By an extenuating explanation, the lover hides the multitude of sins. There is always an explanation for something being what it is. The fact or the facts underlie the situation, but the explanation swings the balance. Every event, every word, every act, in short, everything, may be explained in many ways; as someone has falsely said that clothes make the man, so one can truly say that the explanation makes the object of the explanation into what it is. As regards another man's words, deeds, modes of thought, and so on, there is no such certainty, so that to accept them really indicates choosing. The interpretation, the explanation is therefore, just because a different explanation is possible, a choice. But if there is a choice, then it constantly lies in my power, if I am the lover, to choose the more extenuating explanation. If, then, this milder or more extenuating explanation explains what others frivolously, overhastily, hardheartedly, enviously, maliciously, in short, unlovingly, as a matter of course, explain as guilt, if the extenuating explanation explains this in another way, then it takes away now one fault, now another, and thus makes the multitude of sins less, or conceals it.

Oh, if men would rightly understand what a beautiful use they could make of their imagination, their acuteness, their ingenuity, their ability to co-ordinate, by using it in every possible way to discover an extenuating explanation: then would they increasingly taste one of the most beautiful joys in life; it could become to them a passionate pleasure and need, which would cause them to forget everything else.

Do we not see this in other relationships, how, to mention this one instance, the hunter with every year becomes more and more pas-

sionately devoted to the chase? We do not commend his choice, but we are not speaking about that; we are speaking only about how with every passing year, he devotes himself more and more passionately to this occupation. And why does he do this? Because with every year his experience increases, he becomes more and more resourceful, he overcomes more and more difficulties, so he, the old, experienced hunter, now knows trails no one else knows, knows how to track the game where no one else is able to, now has signs that no one else understands how to make use of, now has discovered a more ingenious method of setting traps, so that he is fairly certain of always succeeding in having a good hunt, even when everyone else is unsuccessful.

We regard it as a burdensome, but yet in another respect, a satisfying and fascinating occupation to be the servants of justice who track down guilt and crime. We are astonished at such knowledge of the human heart, at their knowledge of all, even the most sophistical excuses and inventions, how they can remember from year to year, all, even the most trivial circumstances, just in order, if possible, to secure a clue; at how, if they only glance at the circumstances, they can, as it were, adjure them so they will provide the proof against the guilty; how nothing is too humble to attract their attention, insofar as it might contribute to enlightening their understanding of crime. We admire him when such an officer of justice, by bearing with what he calls a really hardened and thoroughgoing hypocrite, at last succeeds in wresting away his disguise and making his guilt evident. Ought it not to be just as satisfying, just as fascinating, by bearing with what one calls an occasional unseemly conduct, to discover that it was really something quite different, something well-intentioned! Let the judge be appointed by the state, let the officers of justice work to discover guilt and crime: the rest of us are neither called on to be the judge nor the officer of justice, but, on the contrary, we are called by God to love, hence by the help of the extenuating explanation, to cover the multitude of sins. Imagine such a lover, equipped by nature with the most glorious capacities, which every judge must envy him, but all these capacities employed with a zeal and an endeavor which would do honor to a judge, in the service of love, in order to train himself in the art, in order to practice the art, the art of interpretation, which by the help of an extenuating explanation, conceals the multitude of sins! Imagine his rich, his blessed experience, considered in its noblest sense; what a knowledge he has of the human heart; how many noteworthy and touching incidents he has seen, in which, no matter how complicated they seemed, he still succeeded in discovering the good, or even the better, because he had for a long, long time held his judgment in suspense, until quite definitely a little circumstance came to light which led him to a clue; how by

swiftly and boldly centering his whole attention on a quite different aspect of the matter, he had had the good fortune to discover what he was looking for; how by thoroughly exploring the man's life-relationships, by obtaining the most meticulous enlightenment about his condition, he finally triumphed in his explanation! Hence, he "came upon the trail," "he had the good fortune to find what he sought," "he triumphed in his explanation"—alas, is it not strange that whenever these words are read outside of their context, almost every man involuntarily connects them with the uncovering of a crime: we are all so much more apt to think about discovering evil than about discovering good. So the state appoints the judges and the civil officers for the purpose of discovering and punishing the evil. As to the rest, we form associations for the praiseworthy purpose of relieving the poor, educating the orphans and lifting up the fallen: but, in addition to these worthy undertakings, to get by means of the extenuating explanation only a little power, even if it were very little, over the multitude of sins—for this purpose no association has been created!

However, how the lover by means of the extenuating explanation hides the multitude of sins, we do not care to pursue further at this time, since in the two preceding reflections we have considered that love believes all things and hopes all things. But lovingly to believe all things and lovingly to hope all things are the two principal expedients which love, that lenient interpreter, uses for the extenuating explanation which hides a multitude of sins.

Through forgiveness love covers a multitude of sins.

Silence really takes nothing away from the multitude of notorious sins. The extenuating explanation takes away some from the multitude by showing that this or that was not really sin; forgiveness takes away that which still cannot be denied as being sin. So love strives in every way to hide the multitude of sins; but forgiveness is the most outstanding way.

In one of the preceding pages we were reminded of the expression "multiplicity of creation"; let us again employ it for the purpose of illustration. When we say that the investigator *discovers* a multitude of things, while in comparison with him, the ignorant, who also speak about the multiplicity of creation, certainly know very little: then, consequently, the ignorant do not know that this and that exists, but it exists for all that; it is not taken away by nature because of their ignorance; it is only that in their ignorance it does not exist for them. It is different concerning the relation of forgiveness of sins to the multitude of sins; forgiveness takes the forgiven sins away.

This is a wonderful thought, hence also the thought of faith; for faith always lays hold on that which is not seen. I *believe* that the visible has come into existence from that which is not seen; I see the world, but the invisible I do not see, I believe it. So there is also in "forgiveness—and sin" a relation of faith, which one more rarely notices. What here is the invisible? The invisible is, that forgiveness takes away that which still exists; the invisible is, that that which is seen, yet still is not seen; for when it is seen it is evidently invisible so that it is not seen. The lover sees the sin he forgives, but he believes that forgiveness takes it away. This cannot be seen, since the sin can be seen; and, on the other hand, if the sin could not be seen, then neither could it be forgiven. As one, therefore, through faith *believes the invisible* in the visible, so the lover through forgiveness *believes* the visible **away**. Both premises are true. Blessed the believer, he believes what he cannot see; blessed the lover, he believes that away which he still can see.

Who can believe this? The lover. But why is forgiveness so rare? Is it not because faith in the power of forgiveness is so little and so rare? Even a better man, who is by no means inclined to bear malice or spite, and far from being unforgiving, is often heard to say: "I could readily forgive him, but I don't see how that can help." Oh, it is not seen! Still, if you have ever yourself needed forgiveness, then you know what forgiveness can do: why do you speak with so little experience or with such unkindness about forgiveness? For there is something really unkind in saying: "I do not see how my forgiveness can help him." We are not saying that as if a man should become self-important through having it in his power to be able to forgive another man, far from it. This would also be unkindness; truly there is a way to forgive which perceptibly increases the guilt instead of diminishing it. Only love has—I know it seems like jesting, but let us speak thus, only love is resourceful enough through its forgiveness to take the sin away. When I am oppressed by the thought of forgiveness (the fact that I am slow to forgive, or that being able to forgive makes me feel self-important), then no miracle takes place. But when love forgives, the miracle of faith takes place (and since every miracle is one of faith, what wonder, therefore, that along with faith miracles, too, are abolished!): so that which is seen, yet through being forgiven, is not seen.

It is erased, it is forgiven and forgotten, or, as the Scriptures say about what God forgives, it is hidden behind His back. But that which is forgotten, one is not ignorant of, for one is ignorant only of that which one does not know and never has known; what one has forgotten that one has known. Forgetting is in this highest sense the opposite not of remembering but of hoping; for hoping is in reflection to give existence;

forgetting is in reflection to take existence from that which still exists, to erase it. The Scriptures teach that faith lays hold on things not seen, but they also say that faith is the substance of things hoped for; which means that that which is hoped for is, as it were, the unseen, that which does not exist, that to which, on the contrary, hope through reflection gives existence. Forgetting, when God does it in relation to sin, is the opposite of creating; for creating is bringing forth from nothing; forgetting is resolving back into nothing. What is hidden from my eyes, that I have never seen; but what is hidden behind my back, that I have seen. And just in this way does the lover forgive: he forgives, he forgets, he erases the sin; affectionately he turns toward the one he forgives; but when he turns toward him he cannot see what is lying behind his back. That it is impossible to see what lies behind one's back is easy to understand, as also that this expression is also rightly the invention of love; but, on the other hand, it is perhaps then difficult to become the lover who by the aid of forgiveness puts the other's fault behind his own back. It is generally easy for men to place the guilt, even of a murder, upon another man's conscience; but by the aid of forgiveness to put his guilt behind his own back, that is difficult. However, not for the lover; for he hides the multitude of sins.

Do not say, "The multitude of sins remains equally great, whether the sin is forgiven or not, since forgiveness neither takes from nor adds to." Rather answer the question: "Does not the one who unlovingly refuses his forgiveness increase the multitude of sins, not only by the fact that this, his unforgivingness, becomes one sin more, which nevertheless is true and ought then to be taken into account?" Still, we shall not emphasize this at this time But is there not a secret relationship between sin and forgiveness? When a sin is not forgiven, it demands punishment; it cries to men or to God for punishment; but when a sin cries for punishment, then it looks quite different, far greater than when the same sin is forgiven. Is this only an optical illusion? No, it is actually so. It is, to use a rather imperfect figure, not an optical illusion that a sore which has looked dreadful, after the doctor has drained and treated it, looks far less dreadful, although it is, nevertheless, the same sore. What does the one who refuses forgiveness do? He increases the sin, he makes it seem greater. And next, forgiveness takes the life from the sin; but denying forgiveness nourishes the sin. Therefore, even if no new sin appears, if the same old sin still persists, the multitude of sins is really increased. When a sin persists, a new sin really comes, for sin increases through sin; the fact that sin persists is really a new sin. And this new sin you might have prevented by lovingly forgiving, by taking away the old sin, as the lover does who hides a multitude of sins.

Love covers a multitude of sins; for love prevents the sin from coming into existence, strangles it at birth.

Even though with respect to one or another undertaking, a work one wishes to accomplish, one has everything in readiness: one must still wait for one thing, the occasion. So, too, with sin; when it is in a man, it waits for an occasion to manifest itself.

The occasions can be very diversified. The Scripture says that sin takes occasion by the commandment or by the prohibition. Just the fact that something is commanded or prohibited becomes then the occasion; not as if the occasion brought forth sin, for the occasion never produces anything. The occasion is like a middleman, a broker, only helpful in the turnover; it occasions only that which has already been brought about, that which in another sense already existed, namely, as possibility. The commandment, the prohibition tempts, just because it wishes to constrain the evil, and now if sin takes occasion it *takes* it, because the prohibition *is* the occasion. Thus the occasion is, as it were, nothing, a swift something which walks between the sin and the prohibition; in a certain sense it belongs to both, while in another sense, it is as if it did not exist, although, however, again nothing, which is actually existent, came into existence without an occasion.

The commandment, the prohibition is the occasion. In an even more distressing sense, sin in others is the occasion which produces sin in everyone who comes in contact with it. Oh, how often has not an unconsidered, a thoughtless, casually dropped word, been sufficient to furnish an occasion for sin! How frequently has not a frivolous glance caused the multitude of sins to become greater! To say nothing of when a man lives under daily circumstances where he sees and hears nothing but sin and ungodliness: what a rich occasion for the sin in him, how easy the transposition between this, giving occasion and taking occasion! When the sin in a man is encompassed by sin, is it not as if it were in its own element? Nourished by the perpetual occasion, it thrives and grows (if one may be allowed to speak of thriving in connection with evil); it becomes more and more malignant; it takes on a more and more definite form (if one may speak about gaining form in connection with evil, since evil is a lie and a deception, hence without form). It consolidates itself more and more, even though its life is hovering over the abyss, hence without a foothold.

Still, everything which is occasion contributes, insofar as the occasion to sin is taken advantage of, to increase the multitude of sins.

But there is one environment which absolutely does not give and is not an occasion for sin: that is love. When a man's sin is encompassed by love, then it is outside its own element; it is like a beleaguered city whose every connection with its own people is cut off; it is like a man

who has been addicted to drink; when placed upon a scanty ration he loses his strength, vainly waiting an occasion to become intoxicated. It is certainly true, it is possible (for what cannot a depraved man divert to his own depravity!), that sin can make love the occasion for resentment, can rage against it. However, sin cannot in the long run hold out with love; such advantage as it has is generally at the beginning; just as when the drunkard in the first days, before the medical treatment has had the necessary time to make its effects felt, rages with the strength of his infirmity. And next, if there were really a man such that even love—must give up, no, love never does that, but a man who, continually without love, took occasion to sin: just because there is one incorrigible, it does not necessarily follow that there are not many who are healed. So it continues to be exactly and absolutely true that love does cover a multitude of sins.

Oh, the magistrate must often devise very ingenious means to hold a criminal prisoner, and a physician often employs great ingenuity in formulating coercive methods for restraining a demented person: in connection with sin there is no environment so coercive, but also no coercive environment so saving, as love. How often was not the wrath that smoldered within a man only awaiting an occasion; how often was it not stifled because love gave it no occasion! How often did not the evil passion which in the sensual apprehension of curiosity sat on the lookout, spying for an occasion, perish; how often did it not perish at birth because love gave it no occasion, and lovingly watched to see that no occasion should be given! How often did it not free its soul from that resentment, which was so assured of and so prepared, moreover so set upon being able to find ever new occasions to be resentful of the world, of God, of everything; how often did it not find alleviation in a milder mood because love gave no occasion at all for resentment! How often this conceited and defiant mood, which, believing itself injured and misunderstood, therefore took occasion to become even more conceited, desired only a new occasion to prove that it was right, melted away; how often it again died down, because love so soothing, so mildly discutient, simply gave no occasion to the sick conceit! How often did it not go back to what it had contemplated, just to see if it might not succeed in finding an occasion which would justify it, and how often it returned, because love simply gave no occasion for finding an excuse—for the evil! Oh, how many crimes have not been prevented, how many evil purposes defeated, how many desperate resolutions consigned to oblivion, how many sinful thoughts halted on the way to becoming deeds, how many rash words repressed in time, because love gave no occasion!

Woe to the man by whom the offense cometh; blessed the lover who by refusing to furnish the occasion covers a multitude of sins!

VI

LOVE ABIDETH

Now abideth . . . love.—I CORINTHIANS 13:13

YES, God be praised, love abides! Whatever the world may take from you, even if it were your dearest; whatever may befall you in life; however much you may in your striving for the good have to suffer, as you will if men turn indifferently away from you, or as enemies against you; if no one is willing to recognize you or he is ashamed to confess how much he, nevertheless, owes you; if even your own best friend should deny you—if you still in some of your striving, in some of your work, in some of your words have truly been inspired by love: then be comforted, for love abides. What you know of love will be a comfort to you to remember—oh, more blessed than any achievement that man may have accomplished; more blessed even than having spirits subject unto you; more blessed than being remembered by love! What you know of love will be a comfort to you to remember, that neither the present nor the future, nor angels nor devils, and also, praise God, neither your own timid thoughts which spring from a confusion of mind, nor the stormiest and most difficult moment of your life, any more than its last moment, shall be able to take this love away from you; for love abides!

And if at first despondency should make you weak so that you lose the desire to will, in order again to make you strong, alas, in the way despondency does it, strong in the defiance of despondency; if despondency wishes to make everything empty for you, wishes to transform all life into a monotonous and meaningless repetition, so that you look at everything, but so indifferently; you see the fields and forests *again* become green, you see the manifold life *again* moving in the air and water; you hear *again* the chorus of singing birds, *again* see men everywhere engaged in all kinds of labor—and you know of a truth that God exists, but it seems to you as if He had withdrawn into Himself, as if He were far away in heaven, so infinitely far away from all these trivialities, which are hardly worth living for; when despondency would drain the soul out of life, then you still know, but so dubiously, that Christ has existed, but, on the other hand, you realize with an alarming clarity that it was eighteen hundred years ago, so He seems infinitely far away from all these trivialities which are hardly worth living for: oh, then remember that love abides! For if love abides it is equally certain that it is in the future, should this be the comfort you need; and it is in the present, if this is the comfort you need. Set this consolation against all the terrors of the future, that love abides; set

this consolation against all the anxieties and weaknesses of the present, that love abides! Oh, it is consoling to dwellers in the desert when they know with certainty that there are water springs, and that there will be water springs however far they travel: what water springs would be so missed, what manner of death would entail so much suffering as if love had not existed and would not exist eternally!

Behold, this is a very edifying thought, that love abides. We are speaking now, when we speak thus, of the love which sustains the whole of existence, the love of God. If for a moment, a single moment, it were to cease, then would everything be thrown into confusion. But it does not cease, and therefore, however confused everything else may become for you—love abides. Hence we speak about the love of God, about this quality of abiding.

However, in this little work we are constantly dealing only with the works of love, and therefore not with the love of God, but with human love. Naturally no man is love; if he is in love, he is a lover. On the other hand, love is everywhere present where there is a lover. One might believe and one certainly thinks more frequently, that love between man and man is a relation between two. This is indeed true, but untrue insofar as this relation is also a relation between three. First there is the lover; next the one, or the ones, who are the object of his love; but for the third person, love itself is present. When then, in relation to human love, we speak about love abiding, this readily appears to be an act, or that it is not an abiding quality which love has as such, but a quality acquired at every moment, and which also, every moment it is acquired, is again an actual work. The lover abides, he abides in love, preserves himself in love; just by that he brings it about so that his love for men abides. He continues to be lover by abiding in love; through abiding in love, his love abides; it abides, and it is this thought upon which we shall now meditate, that:

LOVE ABIDES.

"Love never faileth"—it abides.

When a child has been away all day among strangers and now considers that it ought to go home, but is afraid to go alone, and yet really wants to stay as long as possible, it says to the older children, who perhaps wished to leave earlier, "Wait for me"; and so the older ones do as the child asks. When of two equals one is more advanced than the other, the latter says to the first, "Wait for me"; and so the second does what the first asks. When two have planned and taken pleasure in the thought of a trip together, but one of them is taken sick, the sick man says, "Wait for me," and so the other does as requested. If one

man owes another man money and cannot pay, then he says, "Wait on me," and so the other man grants his request. When the maiden in love sees that there will be great and perhaps complicated difficulties in the way of her union with the beloved, she says to him, "Wait for me," and so the beloved does as he is asked. And all this is very excellent and commendable, to wait thus on another man. But whether it is love which thus waits, we have not yet seen. Perhaps the interval of waiting is too short really to show how far that which determines the one thus to wait, deserves in a decisive sense to be called love. Alas! perhaps the interval of waiting was so long that the older children said to the child, "No, we can't wait any longer for you." Perhaps the time of waiting went so slowly that the one more advanced said, "No, I can't wait for you any longer without retarding myself too much." Perhaps the sickness dragged out so long that the friend said, "No, I can't wait any longer for you, I shall have to go alone." Perhaps the time dragged out so long for the man who could not pay his debt, that the other said, "No, I can't wait any longer on you. I must have my money now." Perhaps the prospect of marriage with the young girl became so remote that the lover said, "No, I can't wait any longer for you; I owe it to myself and my life not to put it off in this way any longer, hoping year after year for that which is uncertain."—But love *abides.*

The fact of love abiding, or, perhaps more correctly, the question of whether it really abides in this or that case, or whether it ceases: is something which occupies the thoughts of men in such manifold ways, is so frequently the subject of their conversation, and very frequently the principal content of all their poets' works. It is regarded as praiseworthy that love abides, but as unworthy that it does not last, that it ceases, that it changes. Only the first is love; the other seems, because of the change, not to be love—and consequently not to have been love. The facts are these, one cannot cease to be loving; if one is in truth loving, one remains so; if one ceases to *be* loving, then one *was* not loving. Ceasing to love has therefore, in relation to love, a retroactive power. Moreover, I can never weary of saying this and of demonstrating it: wherever there is love, there is something infinitely profound. For instance, a man may have had money, and when he no longer has it, it still remains entirely true that he *had had* money. But when one ceases to be loving, he *has never been* loving. What is still so gentle as love, and what so strict, so jealous for itself, so chastening as love!

Furthermore! If then love ceases, if in the love, the friendship, in short, in the affectionate relation between two, something comes between them so love ceases: then there takes place, as we say, a breach between these two. Love was the connection, was in good understanding between them; then when something comes between them, then is the

love displaced, it ceases, the connection between them is broken, and the breach effects a separation between them. Consequently there is a breach. Christianity, however, does not know this manner of speaking, does not understand it, does not wish to understand it. If one speaks about there being a breach, this is because one believes that love is a relation only between two, instead of its being a relation between three, as was shown. This talk about there being a breach between the two is much too thoughtless; it gives the impression of the love-relationship being merely a matter between these two, as if there were no third party whom it concerned. If then the two are agreed about breaking with each other, there would consequently be no one to object to it. Again, because these two break with each other, it does not follow that these same two might not have affection for others; hence they retain their loving attributes, but their love now applies only in relation to others. Again, the one guilty of causing the breach would have the upper hand, and the innocent one would be defenseless. Still it would be pitiful for an innocent person to be the weaker; it certainly is this way in this world, but eternally understood it can never be this way. Therefore what does Christianity do? Its earnestness immediately fixes the attention of eternity upon the individual, upon each of the two. Just as the two clung to each other in love, each one especially clings in himself to *"love."* Now that does not simply go out with the breach. Before it comes to the breach, before one came to break his love-relationship with the other, he must first have fallen away from "love." This is the important thing; therefore Christianity does not speak of the breach between the two, but always only about what the individual can do who falls away from *"love."* A breach between two smacks too much of business in the temporal existence, as if then the matter were not so dangerous; but to fall away from *"love,"* this expression has the seriousness of eternity. Lo, now everything is in order; now eternity can maintain discipline and order; now will the innocent sufferer in and through the breach, yet become the stronger, if he, too, does not fall away from *"love."* If love were solely a relationship between two, then the one would constantly be in the other's power, insofar as the other were an unprincipled man who wished to dissolve the relationship. When a relationship is only between two, then one constantly dominates the relationship through being able to break it; for as soon as one has broken it, the *relationship* is broken. But when there are three, then one alone cannot do it. The third, as we said, is *"love"* itself, to whom in the breach the innocent sufferer can cling, so that the breach has no power over him. Nor will the guilty be able to flatter himself on making a good bargain in getting out of the affair; for to fall away from *"love,"* that is certainly the dearest possible price; it has an earnestness different from

the hasty breaking with a particular man—and then in other respects being a good and loving man in every way.

But the true lover never falls away from *"love"*; therefore for him there can never come a breach; for love abides. Still in a relationship between two, can one prevent the breach if the other breaks it? It must indeed seem that one of the two is sufficient to break the relationship, and if it is broken, then there is a breach. In a certain sense this is indeed true, but if the lover still does not fall away from *"love,"* he can prevent the breach, he can effect the miraculous; for if he abides, the breach can never really be brought about. Through abiding (and in this abiding the lover is in a covenant with the eternal) he retains superiority over the past, so he transforms what in the past and through it, is a breach, into a possible future relationship. If viewed in connection with the past, the breach becomes with every day and with every year clearer and clearer; but the lover who abides, belongs, through abiding, to the future, to the eternal, and from the viewpoint of the future the breach is not a breach; on the contrary, it is a possibility. But to that the forces of eternity belong; and therefore the lover who abides, must abide in *"love,"* otherwise the past, nevertheless, gradually acquires power, and then gradually the breach becomes evident. Oh, and to this, belong the powers of eternity, in the decisive moment, immediately to transform the past into the future! Yet it has this power of abiding.

How shall I now describe this work of love? Oh, that I might be inexhaustible in describing what is so indescribably joyous, and so edifying to consider!

So, then, a breach took place between the two; it was a misunderstanding, yet the one broke the relationship. But the lover says, "I abide"—so there is still no breach. Imagine a compound word, the last word is missing; there is only the first word and the hyphen (for the one who breaks the relationship can still not take the hyphen with him, the lover retains the hyphen, as naturally belonging to him), consequently imagine the first word of a compound word and the hyphen, and imagine that you know nothing further of what belongs with it: what will you say then? You will say the word is not finished, that something is missing. So with the lover. That it came to a breach cannot be plainly seen, it can only be known by an understanding of the past. But the lover will not know the past, for he abides; and abiding is in the direction of the future. Hence the lover expresses the fact that the relationship, which the other calls a breach, is a relationship which is not yet finished. But because something is lacking, it is not therefore yet a breach. It depends, consequently, on how the relationship is regarded; and the lover, he abides.

So if it then came to a breach, it was a dispute which separated the

two; yet if one broke it, he said, "It is all finished between us." But the lover abides, he says, "It is not finished between us; we are still midway in the sentence, it is only the sentence which is not finished." Is this not true? What is the difference between a fragment and an unfinished sentence? In order to call something a fragment, one must know that there is nothing more to come; if one knows nothing about it, then one says that the sentence is not yet finished. From the standpoint of the past, that it is decided that there is no more to come, we say, "It is a broken-off fragment." As concerns the future, waiting for the next, we say, "The sentence is not finished, something is still lacking." So if it then came to a breach, it would be dejection, coldness, indifference, which separated them; yet if one caused the breach, he says, "I no longer talk with that man, I do not even see him." But the lover says, "I abide, so we shall still talk with each other, for in conversation silence is sometimes part of it." Is this not true? But suppose it was now three years since they last talked together. Behold, it happens here again.

That it was three years ago, one can only know by an understanding of the past; but the lover who each day renews himself through the eternal and abides, over him the past has no power. If you saw two men sitting silently side by side, and you knew nothing else about them, would you infer that it was three years since they had talked with each other? Can anyone determine how long the silence must continue before a man can say, "Now there is no more conversation"? And if one can determine that, can one still know in the particular case, except in the sense of what was past, whether it was true, for time must certainly have elapsed? But the lover who abides constantly extricates himself from his knowledge of the past; he knows no past, he waits only on the future. Is the dancing interrupted because one dancer has gone away? In a certain sense. But if the other one continues to stand in the position which expresses the bowing toward one who is not seen, and if you know nothing about the past: then you will say, "Now the dancing ought to begin, if only the other would come for whom they are waiting." Do away with the past; drown it in the oblivion of eternity through lovingly abiding: then is the end the beginning, and there is no breach!

If the faithless lover has deserted the maiden, but she in the darkening afterglow sits each evening by the window and waits, so she exclaims every evening: "Now he is coming, he is coming right away"; it looks every evening as if there had been no breach, for she abides. That she has sat thus every evening for three years, that she does not say on the individual evenings; therefore the past does not discover it, as little as she herself is aware of it, if she really does abide in love. Still, perhaps the maiden really loved herself. She desired

union with the beloved for her own sake; it was her sole desire; her soul was at one with her desire. In gratitude for its fulfillment she would do everything to make the life of the beloved as beautiful as possible; yes, it is true, but still, still it was for her own sake that she desired the union. If this is true, if she becomes weary, if she adverts to the past, to the length of time—then she no longer sits at the window, she expresses the fact that there is a breach; but love abides.

So then it came to a breach, whatever the occasion was; the one broke the relationship; it was terrible, hate, everlasting, unforgiving hate, would for the future fill his soul: "I will never look at this man again, our ways are forever separated, the abysmal depths of hate lie between us." He concedes certainly that inasmuch as life is a way, they are on the way together, but not in any other sense; he carefully avoids allowing his path to cross the path of the one he hates; the world is almost too small to hold them both; it is agony to him to breathe the same air as the other does; he shudders at the thought that eternity must hold them both. But the lover abides. "I abide," he says, "so we are still on the way together." Is this not so? When two balls (as everyone can prove for himself) strike together, so that by repulsion one takes the other with it in its course, are they not then on the way together? That it happened through repulsion is not seen, that is something in the past which has to be known. But the lover does not wish to know the past, he abides; he continues on the way with the one who hates him, so there is consequently no breach.

What wonderful strength does love not have! The most powerful word ever spoken, moreover, the creative word of God, is: "Be." But the most powerful word any man has uttered is when the true lover says, "I abide." Reconciled with himself and with his conscience, the friend of God, in a covenant with all good angels the lover walks defenseless in the most terrible war; he says only, "I abide." And so he truly is the lover, he will yet conquer, will triumph through his abiding, triumph even more gloriously than did that Roman through his hesitation. For love's abiding is in itself far more glorious. So truly he is the lover: there is no misunderstanding save the one that sooner or later must be overcome by his abiding; there is no hate such but that it must at last give up, and give way to his abiding—if not before, then in eternity. Lo, the one who secured for himself another man's love, and consequently is in possession of it, may every moment be in fear of losing it. But the one who was hated for his love, he is everlastingly certain of gaining love. If time cannot, then will eternity take away the other's hatred, open his eyes to "*love*," and thereby to the love which

continued for the whole life, and now abides in eternity. So love never fails—it abides.

LOVE ABIDETH—IT NEVER FAILS.

That a certain natural, good disposition, a certain benevolent sympathy and helpfulness, which we gratefully appreciate, still has to spend some time in affectionately waiting—that it becomes weary in the course of time, or when it progresses so slowly and consequently over a long period of time: is only too certain. The long process of time is certainly the exigency which causes most people to liquidate their estates. In the commercial world it generally happens that a house fails because suddenly there is all at once a great run on it; but in the spiritual world it is the long time which makes away with so many. Men have spiritual strength enough for a moment, but in the long run, on the contrary, they become irresponsible. Yet love abides. Oh, how well do not the poet and the novelist know how to describe the mutability of everything, to show the power of time over all things which existed in time, over the greatest, the mightiest, the most glorious achievements, over the wonders of the world, which in time became almost unrecognizable ruins; over the most immortal names, which in time ended in the vagueness of legends!

But cannot something happen to love now while it abides, so that although it abides it is transformed in time, but yet in such a way that this transformation is not its fault but is something suffered? Consequently the relationship would be: love abides, no circumstance alters it or forces it to give itself up, yet it is transformed in a change which we call *decrepitude*, and that although we may say about this same love, that it never failed.

Let us for a moment speak about that which occupies men so much, about earthly love, or about that maiden, who according to the poet's tale, sits in the afterglow of evening by the window, and waits for her beloved; alas, while "time comes and time goes." Now it is something long past, for it happened, says the poet, "in a long-vanished age." The maiden did not mark how time came and went, while she waited—and while time marked her. Ordinarily we merely say that time passes; oh, it passes so swiftly for the happy, so indescribably slowly for the sorrowing! Or we say that "time is coming." Oh, it comes so slowly for the hoping, only too swiftly for the fearful. But here the poet says, and excellently, that time comes and time goes, for he wishes to describe the expectant; and for such a one it neither merely goes nor merely comes, it comes and goes. Out of sympathy for the waiting girl time, as it were, undertook to do what the faithless lover should have done. Then when the time came when "he" ought to have come, then time came, but "he"

did not come; so time went again, until the time came when it was time that "he" should come who did not come. And thus time soothed the waiting maiden by coming and going, until, rocked by this movement, she rested in her expectation. Wonderful! One would think that expectation would be more apt to keep a man awake, yet expectation, when one resigns himself to it, is so soothing, and is it not then wonderful! For if you had lain down to sleep, and then suddenly while you slept a powerful fountain had begun its lofty play, you would suddenly wake up startled. But if you lie down to rest by a fountain, you never sleep more soundly, more sweetly, more refreshingly, more deliciously, than when soothed by the rippling play of this fountain.

Consequently time came and time went; the girl truly did not fall away from her love, but yet she fell away—for it was not time which vanished, no, it came and went, but the maiden wasted away. Honor to her steadfast soul! She, too, has honor, the greatest human honor: that a poet has celebrated her in his songs, not as an occasional-poet does for money, not because a girl was from a distinguished family, not because the poet had perhaps known her. No, her name is unknown, it was only her beautiful devotion which inspired the true poet. Let us never forget that thus to remain faithful to her love is a noble, womanly act, a great and glorious deed. As long as there lives a poet she will be highly honored in the world, despite all talk about a busy domestic life; and if the world becomes so wretched that a poet no longer exists, then will the race learn to despair over having no poet, and then a poet will again come who will do her honor.

She wasted away—a sacrifice to love. And yet this is precisely the highest that can be said of any man: he is sacrificed. The problem is only about whether that for which he was sacrificed, was the highest. But the fact of being sacrificed is and remains as long as the world remains a world, eternally understood, a far greater achievement than the fact of triumphing. For the world truly is not so perfect, so the fact of triumphing in the *world*, precisely through identification with the world, has a serious admixture of the world's paltriness. That is, triumphing in the world is like becoming something great in the world; it is as a rule a dubious matter to become something great in the world, for the world is not so excellent that its judgment about greatness would have great significance—except as an unconscious sarcasm.

Hence the maiden is sacrificed to love. Alas, but earthly love is not in the highest sense love, and not the highest love: lo, therefore she faded away—loving in death as she had been in life, but mark, that earthly love had been her highest aspiration. And earthly love is a wish

for this life; therefore time had power over her, therefore she faded away in love, until it also dwindled away, while she, nevertheless, showed that she had power over time, for she did not herself fall away from her love.

But love abides—it never fails. For in spiritual love itself is the spring which wells up in eternal life. That this lover, too, grows old in years and dies sometime in time, proves nothing, for his love remains eternally young. In his love he does not lay hold on the temporal existence as does earthly love, dependent on the temporal existence; for his love eternity is the true season. When he dies he has simply reached the goal; when he dies it simply shows that he had not waited in vain. Alas, when the young maiden died, we simply said: "Unfortunately it seems that she waited in vain." And how could the love which abides become infirm? Can then immortality become infirm? But what is it which gives a man immortality, what except the love which abides? For earthly love is of the temporal existence the most beautiful of temporal things, but yet the frail invention of the temporal existence. Therefore there is here a more profound contradiction. There was no fault in the maiden; she was and remained true to her love. Yet her love changed somewhat through the years. This change lies in the nature of the earthly love. The contradiction is then this: that one with the most honest intentions, willing to be sacrificed, cannot in the deepest sense be absolutely steadfast, or abide in what does not itself abide eternally—and earthly love does not do this. Perhaps the girl herself did not understand this connection; but this persistence of the self-contradiction was what made her death sad. That she is sacrificed has not the solemnity of the eternal, and, hence, neither its inspiration nor its elevation, but it has the sadness of the temporal existence, and so it inspires the poet.

The young maiden wasted away. Even if "he" had come, consequently had come before her death, it would still have been too late. She remained; but time had weakened her desire, the desire for which she lived, while at the same time the desire consumed her. In the most profound sense, on the contrary, the lover who abides, does not become infirm; his love does not consume away. If the one who misunderstood him, the one who became cold to him, the one who hated him, returns, he finds him unchanged, unchanged in his same longing for the eternal, and with the same quiet calmness in the temporal. His love is eternal, he lays hold on the eternal, he rests in the eternal; therefore he expects *each moment* the same as he expects *eternally*, and therefore he is without disquietude, for in eternity there is time enough.

When an expectation of love is essentially able to make a man infirm, it must be because his expectation halts in a dependent-relationship to time, so that time has it in its power to determine whether the expecta-

tion is fulfilled or not. That is to say, the expectation is principally a temporal expectation; but such an expectation does not have the love which abides. That an expectation is essentially merely temporal, produces unrest in the expectation. Time does not really exist without unrest; it does not exist for dumb animals who are absolutely without anxiety; and the watch which tells the time cannot do it when the movement stops. But when the disquietude, as is the case in the merely temporal expectation, oscillates between fulfillment and non-fulfillment, so that the movement becomes swifter in time because of the passing of time, the fact that time elapses precipitates the disquietude, since the fulfillment, if it does not take place in time, cannot take place at all—when this is the case, the expectation is consumed. At last the unrest apparently disappears, alas, just as when sickness has developed into consumption. But the lover who abides, has an eternal expectation, and this eternal expectation gives a sense of proportion in the unrest, which certainly in time swings between fulfillment and non-fulfillment, but independently of time, for the fulfillment is by no means made impossible because time is past: this lover is not consumed.

What faithfulness in the love which abides! It is far from our intention to wish to disparage the loving maiden, as if it were a kind of disloyalty in her (alas, a disloyalty—to a faithless lover!) that she weakened through the years and faded away, so that her earthly love became changed in the change which is the change of love itself through the years. And yet, yet—aye, it is a strange intercrossing of the self-contradictory thought, but it cannot now be otherwise with even the highest form of faithfulness in earthly love, than that it almost seems to be disloyalty, because the earthly love is not the eternal. The contradiction does not lie in the girl, she remained faithful; the contradiction, which the girl herself suffered, lies in the fact that the earthly love is not the eternal, and consequently in the fact that it is impossible with *eternal* loyalty to lay hold on that which *is not* in itself the *eternal*. What faithfulness of love, on the other hand, to abide completely unchanged, without the slightest weakening, the same at every moment—whenever, at whatever time or hour, the misunderstanding, the enemy, the hater wishes to return to this lover! That he who abides never becomes infirm, is indeed to him an eternal gain; but it is in addition, and thus we here regard it, and thus he himself regards it, a work of love in faithfulness to those he loves.

And what would be so disconsolate, something indeed almost to despair over, as if, when the moment came when the mistaken one turned back and sought understanding, when the enemy turned back and sought friendship, when the one who had hated turned back and sought reconciliation—what would be so disconsolate as for the lover then to

become worn out, so that neither understanding, nor the re-establishment of friendship, nor the renewed reconciliation in love would be able to bring about this blessed joy of eternity! And, on the other hand, what can make the moment of forgiveness, the transition to reconciliation so natural, so easy, as the fact that the lover (as was shown in the preceding) by constantly abiding has put the past away from him; for then on his part reconciliation is ready, just as if there had been no separation. When two people both have an idea about the past, or about the separation having been long, then the forgiveness is often a difficult collision, the relationship perhaps never becomes completely re-established. But the lover knows nothing about the past, therefore he does even this last thing in love, he reduces the shock, so that no collision can take place: the transition to forgiveness cannot be made easier. How often have not two been almost on the verge of a reconciliation, but one became hurt, as they say? If this is the case it must be because something unkind from the past has been brought out; for it is indeed impossible for one to hurt one's self on what is softer than the softest, on love. Truly, no boat which glides softly through the smooth water to where the rushes halt its progress and close about it, can be more certain of not being overturned than the one who returns and seeks reconciliation with the love that abides!

Such is the lover. That the most beautiful of everything, that the moment of reconciliation, should become a fruitless effort, a vain attempt, because by that time he had changed: he *prevents* that; for he abides, and never becomes worn out. And that the transition of forgiveness may be as easy as the meeting with one whom one has not seen for a long time; that the conversation of love may immediately be as natural as it is with one with whom one carries on a conversation; that the rambling pace may be as swift in measure as it is between two who for the *first* time begin a new life—in short, that there may be nothing, simply no halting, which might repel, not a second, not a split second: the lover *effects* this, for he abides and never becomes infirm.

VII

MERCY, A WORK OF LOVE, EVEN IF IT CAN GIVE NOTHING AND CAN DO NOTHING

BUT to do good and to communicate, forget not"—but neither forget that this incessant worldly talk about charity and benevolence and generosity and liberality and gifts and donations is almost unmerciful. Oh, let news writers and tax gatherers and parish beadles talk about generosity and count and count the receipts; but let us never fail to realize that Christianity *essentially* speaks about mercy, that Christianity would be the last of all to reward the unmerciful; as if the poor and the wretched were not only in want of money, and so on, but were also excluded from the highest power of all, that of being able to show mercy, because they are not able to be generous, charitable and benevolent. But one preaches and preaches, ecclesiastically and secularly, about liberality and generosity—one forgets even while delivering the sermon, about mercy. This from the Christian standpoint is an indecency. The poor man who sits in church must groan; and why must he groan? Is it so that his groaning, together with the preacher's eloquence, might help to get the purse strings of the rich opened up? Oh, no, he must groan, in the scriptural sense he must "groan against" the preacher, because just when one is so eager to help him, one suffers the greatest injustice. Woe to the one who consumes the inheritance of the widow and the fatherless, but woe, too, to the preacher who keeps silent about mercy in order to speak about charity! The preaching should be solely and alone about mercy. If you know how to speak effectively *about that*, then will the benevolence follow as a matter of course, in proportion to the individual ability. But consider this, that if a man by talking about charity procured money, money, money, consider this, that by keeping silent about mercy, he acted unmercifully toward the very poor and wretched, for whom he secured relief through the help afforded by the rich gifts of charity. Consider this, that if the poor and the wretched disturb us by their petitions, we may be able to get their poverty relieved by charity, but then consider that it would be far more terrible if we forced the poor and the wretched to "hinder our prayers" by groaning against us to God, as the Scriptures say, because we atrociously treated the poor and the wretched unfairly by not telling them that *they* can practice mercy.

We shall in this talk about mercy keep close to this thought, and try to guard ourselves against confusing mercy with what really belongs

to external conditions, over which consequently, as such, love has no control, while it does truly have mercy in its power, just as certainly as love has a heart in its bosom. Because a man has a heart in his bosom, it by no means follows that he has money in his pocket, but the former is far more important, and is certainly decisive as regards mercy. And truly, if one had no money but really knew how to encourage and inspire the poor and the wretched by talking about mercy: then he would have done quite as much as the one who throws some money to the poor, or holds forth about charity from the rich.

So we shall meditate on:

MERCY, A WORK OF LOVE, EVEN IF IT CAN GIVE NOTHING AND CAN DO NOTHING.

We shall strive, according to the ability granted us, to make it as obvious as possible, as alluring as possible, to bring as close home to the poor as possible, what consolation there is for him in being able to be merciful. We shall speak about this by doing away with a part of the worldly illusion. But truly our desire is, by means of what we say, to contribute whatever is needed to make the one who can be charitable and benevolent as humble as possible in his giving, as is well pleasing unto God; as modest in divine shyness as is becoming to a Christian; as willing to give and yet as unwilling to confess that it is alms, as is the one who turns away his face in order not to be shamed by *others* seeing that it brings him honor; or as the one whose left hand actually does not know what his right hand does.

Mercy has nothing to give. It follows as a matter of course that if the merciful has anything to give, then he gives it most willingly. But it is not on this we focus our attention, but on the fact that one can be merciful without having the least thing to give. And this is of great importance, since the fact of *being able* to be merciful is a far greater perfection than having money, and hence *being able* to give.

If that man celebrated for eighteen hundred years, the good Samaritan, had not been riding but walking on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, where he saw the unfortunate man lying; if he had carried nothing with him with which to bind up his sores; if he had then lifted the unfortunate man up, laid him upon his own shoulders and borne him to the nearest inn, where the landlord would under no conditions receive either him or the unfortunate, because the Samaritan did not have even a farthing, and could only beg and beseech the hard-hearted landlord to be merciful, since a man's life was at stake: if he had not therefore . . . still, no, the story is not even finished—hence, if the Samaritan now, far from losing patience because of this, had again gone on, carry-

ing the unfortunate man, had looked for a softer bed for the wounded, had sat by his side, had done everything he could to stanch the flow of blood, but the unfortunate man had died on his hands: would he not then have been just as merciful, quite as merciful, as that merciful Samaritan? Or would there be any objection to calling this the story of the good Samaritan?

Take the story about the woman who laid the two pennies in the Temple chest, but let us make a little poetic change in the story. The two pennies were to her a great sum, which she had not accumulated all at once. She had saved for a long time in order to get them together; and for that she had treasured them wrapped up in a little cloth, in which to carry them when she went up to the Temple. However, a thief had noticed that she had these pennies, had stolen them from her, and had left a similar cloth in place of hers, which contained nothing —something the widow did not know. Hence she went up to the Temple, carrying, as she supposed, the two pennies, that is, nothing to the Temple chest: I wonder if Christ would still not have said what He did say of her, that "she gave more than all the rich"!

Still, mercy without money, what significance has it? Furthermore, the worldly arrogance of charity and benevolence finally goes so far as to laugh at a mercy which has nothing! For it is already bad and revolting enough, this mercilessness of the earthly existence, that when the poor gives his last shilling, and then the rich comes and gives a hundred dollars, that then all see the hundred dollars, that is, that the rich by his gifts entirely obscures the gift of the poor—his mercy. But what madness, if what Christ says is still true, that the poor gave the *most*, what madness: that the one who gives less (the rich—and the great sum) obscures the one who gives more (the poor—and the small portion), moreover, even obscures the one who gives most! However, of course, the world does not say that; it says that the rich gave most, and why does the world say this? Because the world understands only about money—and Christ only about mercy. And just because Christ understood only about mercy, that is why He was so particular about the fact that the widow gave only two pennies; and just for this reason He would say that not even so much was needed, or that she might have given less, and even in giving the less have given more. Wonderful arithmetic! Or rather a wonderful kind of reckoning, not to be found in any arithmetic! He uses a remarkable expression about this widow, "that she gave of her poverty." But the magnitude of the gift increases in proportion to the extent of the poverty, hence, contrary to what the world believes (that the magnitude of the gift is in proportion to the wealth), so the one who is even poorer than that widow, by giving one

penny out of his poverty, gives even more than that widow, who still in comparison with all the rich gave most.

To the world this may seem the most tiresome kind of reckoning, where one penny can become so significant, can become the most significant gift. The world and the world's charity would prefer to deal with great amounts, so great that they are astonishing; and one penny certainly does not astonish—just as little as mercy is one of the shining virtues. Eternally understood, however, this kind of reckoning is the only true one, and it is learned only from eternity, and by abandoning worldly and temporal illusions. For eternity has the keenest eye for and the most completely developed sense of mercy, but no sense at all of money, as little as eternity is in financial embarrassment, or has, according to the Word, the least use for money. Really this is something both to laugh at and to weep over! It would undeniably be an excellent invention on the part of laughter to imagine eternity in financial embarrassment: oh, but let us then weep a little over the fact that the temporal existence has so completely forgotten eternity, and forgotten that, eternally, money is less than nothing! Alas, many believe that the eternal is a delusion, money the actuality: whereas money is, in the understanding of eternity and truth, a delusion! Imagine eternity as you will; confess only that from what you have seen of the temporal existence, there is much of it that you would like to find again in eternity, that you would wish to see again the trees and flowers and stars, to hear again the song of birds and the rippling of brooks. But could it occur to you that there should be money in eternity? No, for then the kingdom of heaven itself would become a land of wretchedness; and therefore this cannot possibly occur to you, just as it cannot possibly occur to the one who believes that money is the actual, that there is an eternity. There is nothing of all you see that you can be so certain will never enter into heaven as: money. And on the contrary, there is nothing which is so certain of heaven as mercy. So you see that mercy infinitely has no relation to money.

Yet money, money, money! That foreign prince may have said, when he turned his back on mighty Rome, "Here lies a city which is for sale, and only waits a buyer": oh, how often has one not been tempted by despondency to turn his back on existence, with these words: "Here lies a world which is for sale, and only waits a buyer"—insofar as one is not ready to say that the devil has already purchased it!

What is the earnestness of life? If you have in truth propounded this earnest question to yourself, then remember how you answered it; or let me remind you of how you answered it. Earnestness is a man's God-relationship. Everywhere where the thought of God is present in what a man does, thinks and says, there is earnestness, in that is there

earnestness. But money is the world's god; therefore it thinks that everything that has to do with money, or has some relation to money, is earnestness. Look at that noble, simple wise man of old; he would not take money for his instruction; and the apostle Paul preferred to work with his own hands rather than defile the Gospel and degrade his apostolic mission and falsify the proclamation of the Gospel, by taking money for it. How does the world judge about such things? However, let us not foolishly ask what the judgment of the world is about that noble, simple man and about the holy apostle, for now the world has learned to pronounce by rote a panegyric upon them. But if a single contemporary in this age were to do at this moment as those two did, how would his contemporaries judge him? They would judge that he was an eccentric, that he was visionary; they would judge that such a man "lacks earnestness." For to make money, that is earnestness; to make much money, even if it was by selling men, that is earnestness; to make much money by contemptible slander, that is earnestness. To proclaim some truth—if one also earns much money in so doing (for the fact of its being true is not taken into consideration, but only the fact that one makes money), that is earnestness. Money, money, that is earnestness.

Thus we are trained from our earliest childhood, disciplined in the ungodly worship of money. Let me cite an example, the first that offers among thousands and thousands—for there are not more herring ahead of the boat that works its way through a shoal of herring, than there are actual examples of training in the worship of money. Imagine, then, a household where the head of the family has issued orders that the next day (which consequently is Sunday) they must all go to church together. But what happens? Sunday morning when it is time to go, the girls are found not to have finished dressing. Then what does the father say, the—earnest father, who earnestly trains his children to worship money? Yes, he naturally says nothing, or as good as nothing, for here there is no occasion for a warning or a reprimand; he says, to be sure, "If the girls are not ready, they will have to stay at home, that is all there is to it." But imagine, just imagine, how terrible it would have been, if it had been the theater, and the girls had not been ready at the proper time. Imagine then how this—earnest father would have taken on, and why? Because they had wasted so much money—while, on the contrary, by remaining home one Sunday, they had even saved the collection money. Now, however, the girls will get a severe—earnest, fatherly reprimand; now it is a great fault, a great sin, not to have been ready—and therefore that earnest father who brings up his children with earnestness, must not allow a second offense to go unpunished. For the fact that it is disobedience on the part of the girls,

is the least of it—in that case the fault would be just as great on Sundays; no, the serious thing was that the money was wasted. Lo, one is called to be a father, one is expected to have a fatherly dignity and to make a responsible use of this dignity; he is expected to educate his children. Now this may be educating, but one does not train human beings in this manner, but only fools and monsters!

But if a man has this conception about money, what conception can he have about the mercy which has no money? Such a mercy must be regarded as a kind of madness, an illusion. Yet then, too, must eternity and Christianity be regarded as a kind of madness, an illusion. A pagan emperor may have said that one should not smell of money. On the contrary, Christianity teaches how rightly to smell of money. It teaches that money as such smells bad. Therefore is some powerful perfume needed to drive out the stench. Have mercy: let it be present in giving money; without it money has a bad odor. Lo, even a beggar can say this, and he ought to become just as immortal by his expression as that emperor—and capitalist. Mercy is the most powerful perfume. If prayer is the offering of the lips and acceptable to God, then mercy is truly the offering of the heart, and is, as the Scriptures say, a sweet savor in God's nostrils. Oh, never forget in your thoughts about God, that He has not the slightest understanding of money!

My hearer, if you were a speaker, which task would you choose: the one of speaking to the rich about practicing charity, or the one of speaking to the poor about being merciful? I certainly know which I would choose, or rather which I would have chosen—if only I were a speaker. Oh, there is something so indescribably conciliatory in speaking to the poor about practicing mercy! Oh, how necessary it is, if not for the sake of the poor, then for your own sake, something you can readily verify. For if you only try it, you will see that your ideas about it will constantly reverse themselves, as if it would do no good to speak to the poor about mercy, since they have nothing to give, and therefore one ought to speak to the rich about mercy to the poor. Thus if the poor is indigent in his poverty, and then the world rejects his idea that he might be able to practice mercy, so he is pointed out, abandoned, as a pitiful object of charity, who at most can bow in humble gratitude—while the rich are so kind in practicing mercy! Merciful God, how unmerciful!

So the speech is addressed to you, the poor and the wretched! Oh, be merciful! Preserve that heart in your bosom which in spite of poverty and wretchedness, still has sympathy for the wretchedness of others; that heart which before God has confidence to know that one can be merciful, moreover, that one can be merciful to the highest degree, in a remarkable and superior sense, even though one has nothing to give.

"Oh, be merciful!" See, here it is again, and who does not immediately and involuntarily think of the poor, of the cry of the beggars to the rich, "Be merciful"?—however incorrect this expression is, since it is charity which is asked for. And therefore we speak correctly, we who say to the poor, to the poorest of all: "Oh, be merciful!" Finally let not this envious pettiness of earthly existence so corrupt you as to make you forget that you can be merciful; so corrupt you that a false bashfulness stifles the best in you! A false bashfulness—yes, for until the true comes, oh, that it might always come, but in any case, it ought to come with money; if you get money, and then consequently can give, then, not till then, have you anything to be ashamed of. Be merciful, be merciful toward the rich! Remember, you have mercy in your power, while he has money! Do not misuse this power; do not be so unmerciful as to cry to heaven for punishment upon his lack of mercy! Moreover, we know well how little the world cares about the sigh of the poor to God when it accuses the rich, and yet this air-borne sigh, this ignored word, is the most important of all: but yet, yet, although not unacquainted with the loud scream—I blow all that away, if only no poor man may with justice accuse me in secret before God. Oh, be merciful! If the rich man is stingy and close, or, even if he is not stingy about money, is yet taciturn and repellent: then do you be rich in mercy and compassion. For compassion works wonders; it makes the two pennies into a great sum when the poor widow gives them; it makes the sparse gift into a greater amount, when the poor mercifully does not reproach the rich; it makes the churlish giver less guilty, when the poor mercifully conceal it. Oh, how many has not money made unmerciful! Shall money also have the power to make those unmerciful who have no money? Then the power of money has completely triumphed. But if the power of money has completely triumphed, then, too, is mercy absolutely abolished.

Mercy is able to do nothing. The sacred stories have among other things this remarkable quality that in all their simplicity, they still always get everything said that should be said. Such is also the case in the Gospel about the rich and the poor man. Neither the misery of Lazarus nor the luxury of the rich is minutely painted and described; yet there is one detail added that is well worth our attention. It is said that Lazarus was laid at the rich man's door full of sores, but the dogs came and licked his sores. What is it that the rich man represents? Mercilessness, or more exactly, inhuman mercilessness. In order to illustrate the lack of mercy, we may place a merciful man by his side. This is what was done in the story of the good Samaritan, who by contrast throws light upon the Levite and the priest. But the rich man was cruel; therefore the evangelist uses dogs for illustration. What a contrast! We shall

not exaggerate and say that a dog can be merciful; but in contrast to the rich man, it is as if the dogs were merciful. And this is the horrifying thing, that when the rich man had refused mercy, then the dogs had to be merciful. But there is something else to be found in this comparison between the rich man and the dogs. The rich man certainly had it in his power to do something for Lazarus. The dogs could do nothing; and yet it seems as if the dogs were compassionate.

Notice, that this is just what we are speaking about in this meditation. It naturally follows that if the compassionate can do anything, then he is only too glad to. But it is not upon this that we shall focus our attention; on the contrary, it must be focused on the fact that one can be compassionate without being able to do the least thing. And this is of great importance, since the fact of being able to be compassionate is a far greater perfection than being able to do something.

Suppose it had not been one man traveling from Jericho to Jerusalem, but two, and that they were both attacked by robbers, disabled, and that no traveler came by—suppose then, that the one of them could do nothing but groan, while the other forgot and overcame his own suffering in order to speak soothing and friendly words, or, in what involved great pain, he dragged himself to a little water in order to fetch the other a refreshing drink. Or suppose they had both been deprived of speech, but one of them in his silent prayer sighed to God for the other one, too: would he not then have been compassionate? If someone has cut my hands off, I cannot play the zither, and if someone has cut my leg off, then I cannot dance; and if I lie crippled on the shore, then I cannot throw myself into the sea to save another man's life; and if I myself lie with a broken arm or leg, then I cannot rush into the flames to save another's life: but I can be compassionate everywhere.

I have often thought about how an artist might represent compassion, but I am satisfied that it cannot be done. As soon as an artist has done it, it becomes doubtful whether what he has represented is compassion or something else. Compassion is certainly shown when the poor gives the half-shilling and yet all that he owns, when the helpless can do nothing and yet is compassionate. But the artist would prefer to portray the gift, consequently the charity, and would rather portray that which looks best painted, the great achievement. Try to paint this: a poor woman, who gives the other person the only bread she has—and you will certainly find that you cannot portray the most important thing; you can express that it is one loaf, but not that it is the only one she owns. The Danish people are familiar with the dangers of the sea. There is a picture which represents a brave sailor who was responsible for the pilot boat's so frequently having saved human lives. His picture is shown, and below at one side a wreck, and on the other side a

pilot boat. You see this can be painted. And it is glorious to steer like an angel of salvation, through the breakers, and to do it bravely, courageously, and, if you like, compassionately. Oh, but have you never seen, have you never imagined the wretchedness of those who, perhaps from childhood or from later in life, have been so unhappily scolded, so ill-treated, that they are not able to do anything, anything at all, are perhaps scarcely able to express their sympathy in clear words: shall we now be unmerciful enough to add this new cruelty to all their misery, to deny them the power of compassion—because it certainly cannot be represented, since such a subject cannot be portrayed except as an object of compassion! And yet it is certain that the compassion of such people is the most beautiful and the truest, and is worth more because they have not been so dulled by their own suffering that they have lost sympathy with others.

Imagine a widow in her poverty; she has but one daughter, but nature has been a stepmother to this daughter, has denied her almost every gift that might make her a comfort to the mother—imagine that this unfortunate girl, who groans under the heavy burden, yet in proportion to the tiny ability granted her is inexhaustible in devising ways to do the little, the nothing, she can do to ease her mother's life. Lo, this is compassion! No rich man would squander a thousand dollars to have an artist paint it, for it cannot be painted. But every time the distinguished benefactor, who assists the mother, comes to them, the poor girl stands embarrassed; for "he" can do so much—his compassion obscures that of the girl! Oh, well, that is the way it looks in the eyes of the world, perhaps, too, in the eyes of a painter and a connoisseur.

So the speech is addressed to you, you wretched one, who can do simply nothing: do not forget to be compassionate! Be merciful; this consolation, that you can be compassionate, to say nothing of the fact that you are compassionate, is far greater than if I could guarantee that the most powerful will show you compassion. Be merciful toward us more fortunate ones! Your sorrow-filled life is like a dangerous indictment of the loving Providence; you have it in your power, therefore, to frighten the rest of us; be merciful! Truly, how much compassion from such an unfortunate one do not the mighty and the happy certainly need! Which is more compassionate, capably to relieve the needs of others, or by suffering quietly and patiently, mercifully to take pains not to disturb the joy and happiness of others? Which of these two loves more: the happy who sympathizes with another's suffering, or the unhappy who truly sympathizes with others' joy and happiness?

"But the principal consideration is still the fact that the needy must be helped in every way, and that everything possible must be done to

relieve the needy." So speaks the well-intentioned temporal existence, and it can never speak otherwise. On the contrary, eternity says: there is only one danger, the danger that no compassion is shown; even if all necessity were relieved, it is not therefore decided that it is done through compassion, and if this were not the case, then would the wretchedness arising from the fact that it was done without compassion, be greater than that from any temporal need.

The principal trouble is that the world does not understand eternity. Temporal existence has a temporal, and insofar a hasty conception of the need, and also a sensual conception about the greatness of the gift, and about being able to do something to relieve the need. "The poor, the wretched man might die—consequently it is of the utmost importance that he should be helped." No, answers eternity, the most important thing is that compassion be shown him, or that the assistance is the assistance of compassion. "Raise money, build us hospitals, that is of the utmost importance!" No, says eternity, the most important thing is compassion. That a man dies is, eternally understood, no misfortune, but it is unfortunate if no compassion is shown. There also hangs, remarkably enough, beneath that picture which represents a wreck on one side and a pilot boat on the other, there hangs the picture: "Poverty—and Violent Death; Prosperity—and Natural Death," hence death on both sides. And eternity holds it unshakably true that compassion is the more important. No thinker can be so persistent in this thought as eternity is; no thinker is so calm, so undisturbed by momentary appearances and momentary dangers as eternity, which seems to emphasize that it is still more important that help be afforded in every possible way; no thinker is so calm, so untroubled, as eternity. And no thinker is so certain that men must at last give in and accept his opinion as eternity is, for it says: only wait, we shall talk this over in eternity, and there the talk will be solely about compassion, and solely about the difference: merciful—not-merciful. Oh, that I might show the face eternity will put on when the rich man in reply to the question as to whether he has been merciful, answers: "I have given away a hundred thousand dollars to the poor!" For eternity will look at him surprised, as one who cannot get it into his head what the rich man is talking about; and then eternity will again submit the question: Have you been merciful? Imagine a man who went out to a mountain to talk with it about his affairs; or that a man had dealings with the wind about his own achievements: eternity will no more understand what the rich man is talking about concerning the hundred thousand dollars, and what the powerful men mean by saying that they have done everything, than the mountain or the wind would understand what was said to them.

Is it compassionate to give hundreds of thousands to the poor? No. Is it compassionate to give half a shilling to the poor? No. Compassion depends on **how** it is given. But then the hundred thousand and the half-shilling are of no consequence. That is, I can see compassion just as much in the one as the other; that is, compassion can be, and can be as perfectly manifest in the half-shilling as in the hundred thousand which is given. But if I can really see compassion as well in the half-shilling as in the hundred thousand, then I can really see it better in the half-shilling; for the hundred thousand have an accidental significance which easily attracts the sensual attention to itself, and thereby confuses me in seeing the compassion. Is it compassion when the one who can do everything does everything for the wretched? No. Is it compassion when the one who can do practically nothing, does this nothing for the wretched? No. Compassion depends on **how** all this and this nothing is done. But then I can equally well see compassion in this everything and in this nothing; and if this is so, then I can really see it best in this nothing, for the being able to do everything is a glittering externality; it has an accidental kind of significance, which still reacts strongly upon the sensual in me, easily attracts my attention to itself, and interferes with my sense of compassion.

Let me continue the illustration. If you wished to observe the movements and the circles which a stone produces when it is thrown into the water: would you journey to those foreign parts where the mighty waterfall dashes roaring down, and there cast in the stone, or would you throw it out into the swelling sea? No, you would do neither. For although the stone would produce movements and create circles here as everywhere, you would be prevented from seeing them. Therefore you would do exactly the opposite; you would seek a quiet little pool, really the smaller the better, and now undisturbed by anything irrelevant, you could really center your attention on the movements you wished to observe.

What do you understand by a significant man? Is it indeed a man who has significant inward worth? If you now seriously desire to absorb yourself in the observation of such a man, would you prefer to see him in the midst of great wealth, or decked out with stars and ribbons? Or would you not think that this precisely interfered with your completely centering your mind on the contemplation of his significant inwardness? So with mercy. Mercy is the *true significance*. The hundred thousand or the worldly doing of everything, is the *significant* gift, the *significant* assistance. But the one significance is that one which *must be regarded*; the other significance, that one which must be *left out of account*. And because of distrust of yourself, you wish that away which you must

disregard—alas, while the world believes it far easier to pay attention to mercy when it gives a hundred thousand than when it gives a half-shilling, and consequently thinks it easier to see the compassion by looking at that which must be disregarded, if one really wishes to see the compassion.

Still, let us not forget that compassion may be shown in both instances, in the half-shilling and in the hundred thousand, in the everything of the powerful and in the nothing of the wretched. But even if it is conceded that compassion is present, you will still easily convince yourself that the greater, the more astonishing the gift is, the more wonderful the help is, the more there is something which will hinder you from completely dwelling on the compassion. It is told of the apostle Peter, that one day when he went up into the Temple, he met a lame man who begged alms of him. But Peter said to him: "Silver and gold I have none, but that which I have I give you: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, stand up and walk." And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up. And immediately the man's legs and ankles became strong, and he leaped up, stood, and walked about. Who would dare doubt that this was an act of compassion, and, more, it was a miracle? But a miracle immediately attracts attention to itself, and thereby in part away from the compassion, which is never more apparent than when it can do nothing at all; for then there is simply nothing at all to hinder seeing quite definitely and exactly, what compassion is.

Eternity alone understands about compassion; if you therefore wish to learn to understand compassion, you must learn it from eternity. But if you wish to understand the eternal, then there must be quiet about you, while you absolutely center your attention on inwardness. Alas, the hundred thousand, they make a noise, at least they are easily able to make a noise; you are, as it were, stunned by the thought of being able to give a hundred thousand as easily as you give four shillings; your mind is diverted, you begin to think of the glorious circumstance of being able to do good on such a scale. But then the eternal is disturbed: that the glorious, the blessed, the most blessed condition is to be compassionate.

And now power and might! This again easily confuses the mind; you are amazed at external things. But if you are amazed, then you may be certain that it is not compassion that you see, for compassion does not arouse amazement. What is there, indeed, to be amazed over when even the most wretched, and he best of all, can practice mercy? Oh, compassion, if you in truth see it, it does not awaken amazement; it touches you, it makes, because it is inwardness, the most intimate impression upon you. But when is the inwardness ever more distinct

than when there is nothing external in it, or when the external through humility and insignificance, is rather like an opposition, and, sensually understood, literally is a hindrance to seeing the inwardness? And when this is the case with respect to compassion, then we have the mercy which is the subject of the discourse, the mercy which is a work of love, even if it has nothing to give, and is able to do nothing.

VIII

THE VICTORY OF THE RECONCILIATION IN LOVE, WHICH WINS THE VANQUISHED

AND having done all, to stand." But is not this then easy enough, is it not a matter of course that one stands, or remains standing, when one has overcome everything? If one actually has overcome everything, what then would be able to pull one down? If one has actually overcome everything, then is there anything more against which one has to stand? Oh, that experienced apostle knew well whereof he spoke! It follows as a matter of course that one who cowardly and fearful never exposes himself to danger, never triumphs, never overcomes anything; that he is, on the contrary, the one overcome is conceded in advance, because he gave up. But, on the other hand, just when a man has overcome everything, he is perhaps nearest to losing everything—if at that moment he loses anything, he really loses everything, which too is only possible for one who has won everything. The moment of victory is perhaps the most difficult of all, far more difficult than any moment of conflict. Precisely the cry of victory, "Everything is decided," is perhaps the most ambiguous word of all, if at the very second it is uttered, "now everything is decided," it means that "everything is lost." Consequently there is something to be said about standing after having overcome everything; moreover, it is really only from that moment that anything can really be said about it.

Now we are ready to understand the concept of overcoming. When you say that one overcomes something, you picture him to yourself as bent forward to push against that which is resisting him. Hence, in the most profound sense, there can be no talk about standing; for although the resistance stands against him, in another sense it holds up the one who leans forward against it. But now, now everything has been overcome. Now it depends on his standing and on his continuing to stand, so that he does not lose the victory as swiftly as he won it. Is this not so? The weak, the timorous, succumb to the resistance; but the courageous, who boldly walks into danger, if he falls, he really falls, as we say, over his own legs: as courageous he overcomes the opposition, and yet he falls. He does not fall in the danger but in his impetus, hence because he did not stand.

Paul says in another place, that we are more than conquerors through faith. But can one do more than conquer? Yes, one can, if one stands after having conquered, preserves the victory and abides in the victory. How often has it not been seen that the one who had conquered had also

exerted himself so, that, unlike that Greek commander, he did not even need one more such victory—for this was enough for his destruction! How often has it not been seen that the one who had lifted a weight, could not support the weight after having lifted it; or that the one who pressed victoriously against the storm without weakening, exhausted could not endure the calm which came with the victory; or the one who was so hardy he could endure all the changes of weather, heat and cold, but could not stand the strong breeze at the moment of victory! And how often has not a victory been won in vain, if the victor then became proud, conceited, arrogant, self-satisfied, and thus lost just through having conquered!

If we were then to express in a qualification of the thought, what lies in that apostolic word (to stand after having overcome everything), we should have to say: spiritually understood there are always two victories, a first victory, and then the second by which the first victory is preserved. We certainly cannot express the distinction between the godly and the worldly more accurately than by saying: the worldly always talks only about one victory, the godly always about two. That no man should deem himself happy until he is dead (and thereby has left it to the survivors), that idea the worldly mind can also get into its head; but, on the contrary, the worldly mind will become impatient when it hears anything said about the second victory. There will, namely, be talk to some purpose about this, or about standing after having conquered, if a man happens to fail in that on which the worldly mind naturally sets the greatest store, to fail in *that* for whose sake one has endured all the hardships of war; for if this is so, a man never has a chance to be proud of the victory he is granted, not even at the very moment.

On the contrary, at the very moment of his triumph, when he wishes to make preparation for the celebration of the triumph, just at that very moment the godly reflection carries him into a new conflict, in every way the most difficult one, because it is the most inward one, because in it he strives with himself and with God. If he falls in this conflict, then he falls by his own hand; for physically and externally understood, I can fall by the hand of another, but spiritually there is only one who can destroy me, and that is myself; spiritually a murder is inconceivable—certainly no man of violence can murder an immortal spirit. Spiritually only self-destruction is possible. And if a man triumphs in this second fight, it precisely signifies that he gets no honor from the first victory; for conquering signifies in this connection, giving God the honor. In the first conflict, he fought against the world for the victory which was won; in the second conflict he fights with God about that victory. A man only stands then after having overcome

everything, when he immediately, at the very moment of victory, ascribes the victory to God. As long as he was striving, the opposition would, in a certain sense, be that which helped him to stand; but when he has ascribed to God the honor of the victory, God is the support by whose help he stands. That it was also through God's assistance that he conquered (although there can also be victory in an external sense without God's assistance) is certainly possible; but God's assistance does not really become clear until after man has conquered. Oh, in the eyes of the world, what folly: to need God's assistance most of all after one has conquered!

It is such a twofold conflict or twofold victory we shall now make the object of a more intensive reflection, as we speak about:

THE VICTORY OF THE RECONCILIATION IN LOVE, WHICH WINS THE VANQUISHED.

There is presupposed consequently, when there is talk about a "vanquished," a first victory which has been already won. What is this? It is overcoming evil with good. The conflict may have been slow and difficult enough; for if the lover is to overcome evil with good, this is not decided all at once or with one blow; on the contrary the combat often becomes more and more strenuous, and, if you will, more dangerous—if one is willing to understand what the dangerous is. The more good the lover has shown toward the unloving, the longer he has held out in requiting evil with good: the nearer, in a certain sense, comes the danger that at last the evil might still overcome the lover, if in no other way, then by making him cold and indifferent toward such an unkind man. Oh, there must be a great depth of wealth in goodness, as only the lover has it, a steady warmth of inextinguishable, purifying fire over a long time, to be able to hold out in requiting evil with good!—But this victory is won, the non-lover is vanquished.

What is the relationship in this conflict? On the one side stood the lover (or what we might also call him: the good, the noble; for in the first conflict it was not readily apparent that he was the lover), and he had the good on his side. On the other side stood the non-lover, fighting by the aid of evil. Thus they strove. The lover had for his task to preserve himself in the good, so that the evil might get no power over him. Consequently he did not have so much to do with the non-lover as with himself. It was not for the sake of the non-lover but for the sake of the good, also in a noble sense for his own sake, that he strove to conquer in this conflict. The two consequently, as regards themselves, are striving with each other, but, outside of each other, they are in a certain sense irreconcilably striving, as the conflict is between good and

evil. The one strove by the help of the good, the other in a covenant with evil; and the latter was vanquished.

Now the relationship is changed; it now becomes readily apparent that the lover is present in the conflict; for he not only fights that the good may *abide* in himself, but he fights *appeasingly* so that the good may triumph in the unloving, or he fights in *order to win the vanquished*. The relationship is consequently no longer a simple conflict-relationship, for the lover fights on the side of his enemy in his behalf; he wishes to fight out the cause of the non-lover to victory.

This is *reconciliation in love*. For when the enemy, or the one who committed the wrong, comes to you and seeks forgiveness—so that you are willing to forgive: that is commendable and praiseworthy, and also loving. Oh, but how tardy! Do not say that "you granted it *immediately*, *as soon* as he begged for it"—consider rather what promptitude in reconciliation true love has in comparison with that, or in comparison with a promptitude which, by being dependent on another's haste or slowness in asking for forgiveness, is precisely *essentially*, thereby tardiness, even if accidentally it comes very swiftly.

Long, long before the enemy considers seeking reconciliation, the lover is already reconciled with him. And not only this; no, he has gone over to the enemy's side, he fights for his case, even if he does not understand or wish to understand it; therefore he labors to bring about the reconciliation. Lo, we may call it the fight of love, or the fight in love! To fight with the assistance of the good *against* the enemy—that is praiseworthy and noble; but to fight *for* the enemy—and against whom? against himself, if you wish to express it thus: that is, yes, that is loving, or it is reconciliation in love! And thus, too, is reconciliation enjoined in the Holy Scriptures. The words read, "When you offer your gift upon the altar, and there remember . . ."—but what would you expect would now follow? Is it not that you have something against someone? But that is not the way it is. It reads ". . . and you there remember that your brother has aught against you, then leave your gift before the altar (for there is no hurry about the gift if this is so), and go out and be reconciled with your brother (for reconciliation needs this haste, also for the sake of the gift which waits upon the altar), and then come and offer your gift." But is not this too much to ask? Who is it who needs forgiveness: the one who did the wrong or the one who suffered the wrong? Certainly it is the one who did the wrong who needs forgiveness. Oh, but the lover, who suffered wrong, he needs to forgive, he needs reconciliation, appeasement, which word, unlike the word "forgiveness," makes a distinction by reminding about right and wrong, but lovingly notes that both are needed. It is not in the most perfect sense reconciliation to forgive when forgive-

ness is asked for; but it is reconciliation to need to forgive almost before the other has thought of seeking forgiveness. Therefore the Scriptures say, "Agree with thine adversary quickly"; but one can never be more benevolent then when one is one's self the needy; and "quicker" to forgive than when one gives his forgiveness before it is asked, fights to give it while there is still opposition—not against giving, but against receiving forgiveness.

Oh, heed well what the relationship is; for the true Christian is always exactly the opposite of that which the natural man most easily and most naturally understands. "To fight for forgiveness," who does not understand this immediately about fighting in order to get forgiveness? —Alas, for humanly speaking this is often considered hard enough. And yet it is not simply that about which we are speaking; we are talking about lovingly fighting to have the other accept forgiveness, to allow himself to be reconciled. Is not this the Christian way? It is God in heaven who through the apostle says: "Be ye reconciled": it is not men who say to God, "Forgive us." No, God loved us first. And, again another time, when the question was about reconciliation, God was the one who came first—although yet, from the standpoint of righteousness, He was the one who had waited longest. So, too, in the relation between man and man: the true reconciliation is, it is well to note, when the one who offers forgiveness is not the one who needs it.

So the lover then in reconciliation fights to win the one vanquished. —*To win the one vanquished!* What a beautiful use of language, of the word "to win"! For listen to what follows! When we say "to win" a victory, then we immediately hear the violence of the conflict; but when we speak of winning someone, of winning someone to ourselves, what an infinite gentleness is not contained in that word! What is so intriguing as the thought and the phrase, "to win one"; how could it suggest any thought of strife! For in all strife two are needed, and here there is only one: the non-lover; for the lover is in his reconciliation his best friend, who wishes to win the vanquished. To win the vanquished. What a wonderful reversal is not *this whole idea*! One might believe that the winning would be *less* than the *overcoming,* for "over" suggests how it surpasses winning. And yet the speech here is really an ascending climax, is about the higher, although it is still about winning the one overcome. Perhaps from the standpoint of pride overcoming is greater, but in the understanding of love, this less is the greater, "the winning of the overcome." Beautiful conflict, more beautiful than the lovers' quarrel when the lover must be the one, and hence so much more the loving, when he must be the one to fight through to reconciliation! Beautiful victory, most beautiful of all victories, when the lover succeeds in winning the vanquished!

To win the vanquished. Do you now see the twofold victory we are speaking about! For if the lover only wishes to fight the one war, to overcome evil with good, and he has then conquered, then let him look well to it that he stands after having overcome everything. Oh, his fall is only too near at hand, if he does not let love and the godly reflection carry him at once into the next conflict, the winning of the vanquished. When this is done, then he has steered safely past the dangerous rocks, where one becomes proud of having held out in requiting evil with good; where one becomes self-important because of having requited evil with good. For if you go immediately into the next conflict, who then becomes the more important? Still, I suppose, the one you are striving to win. But consequently, you are not the more important. Still, just this is the humiliating thing which only love can endure, that one goes backward, as it were, when one is going forward, so everything is reversed: when one has one's self vanquished everything, the vanquished has become the more important. Let us assume that the brother of the prodigal son had been willing to do everything for his brother—one thing had still never entered his head, that the prodigal brother could become the more important. Now it is difficult to get this idea into one's head; it does not enter into a man in that way.

But to win a vanquished adversary is always difficult and has in the relationship of which we speak, a special difficulty. To be vanquished gives a humiliating feeling; therefore the one vanquished prefers to avoid the one who vanquished him; for by contrast his defeat becomes greater, but no one makes the fact of his defeat so clear as the one who overcame him. And yet it is here the victor who must win the vanquished, consequently they must be brought together. Again the situation has a special difficulty. In less important matters it might be handled so that the victor concealed from the vanquished that he was the vanquished, piously deceived him, as if it were he who was right; appeasingly yielded, even to allowing him to be right where he was wrong. We shall not attempt to decide how far this may ever be permissible; but in the relationship of which we are speaking, the lover dared least of all to do this. It would have been weakness, not love, to allow the non-lover to imagine that he had been right in the evil he did; it would not have been reconciliation, but a betrayal, which would confirm him in the evil. No, it is precisely of importance, it belongs to the works of love, that by the help of the lover it should become obvious to the non-lover how unjustifiably he had acted, so that he may deeply feel the wrong he has been guilty of. This the lover must do; and thereby he will also win the vanquished; yet, no, it is not "also," for it is one and the same thing, since he can truly only wish to win him for himself, or to win him for the truth and himself, not to win him for

himself by deceiving him. But the more profoundly the vanquished comes to feel his wrong, and also insofar his defeat, the more he must feel repelled from the one who—lovingly inflicts upon him this deathblow. Oh, difficult task: at once to repel from one's self, and to win to one's self; at one and the same time to be as severe as the truth demands, and yet also as gentle as love desires, in order to win the one against whom severity is used! In truth, a miracle, if one succeeds; for it, like everything Christian, contradicts the proverb: that one cannot do two things at the same time. That a vanquished man should attempt to see how he could falsely find the most lenient interpretation is easy to understand; but to win one to one's self by the help of the strict interpretation of the truth—that is difficult.

Reflection is halted by the idea of the task. Consider what might happen if the non-lover came into collision with another non-lover, who had nourished and stimulated all his evil passions. Consider this, as you *pause for the purpose of seeing clearly how the lover behaves.*

The non-lover is vanquished. But what does this mean, that he is vanquished? It means that he has been overcome by the good, the true. And what is it the lover desires? He wishes to win him to the good and the true. But to be overcome, when this means being won for the good and the true—is this then so humiliating? Look at love and reconciliation. The lover does not let it appear at all, nor does it occur to him that it is he who has conquered, that he is the victor—no, it is the good that has conquered. In order to take the humiliation and injury away, the lover slips a higher one between himself and the non-lover, and thereby removes himself. When there is not a third party between man and man, every such relation becomes a false one, either too passionate, or too resentful. This third, which philosophers would call the Idea, is the true, the good, or, more correctly, the God-relationship; this third is in certain phases of the relationship the cooling, in other instances the appeasing element. Truly, the lover is too loving thus to place himself over against the vanquished, and himself to be the victor who enjoys the victory—while the other is the vanquished; it is precisely unloving thus to wish to dominate another man. By the help of the third party whom the lover brings in between them, they are both humbled: for the lover humbles himself before the good whose humble servant he is, and, as he himself confesses, in weakness; and the vanquished humbles himself not before the lover, but before the good. But when in a relationship between two, both are humbled, there is nothing humiliating for either of them. How resourceful love can be, what a jack-of-all-trades it is!

Would you rather that I should, as you say, speak more seriously? Oh, you may believe that the lover would rather that I should speak

thus; for even in connection with what occupies one with the earnestness of eternity, there is a joy in succeeding which makes one prefer to speak in this way. There is, too, in speaking in this manner, a kind of shyness, and insofar also, a solicitude for the one who was wrong. Alas, a reconcilement in love is perhaps often unsuccessful because one took it too earnestly, that is, because one had not learned from God the art (and one learns it from God) of being earnest enough, but being able to do it so easily, as even the truth can permit. Never believe that earnestness is surly, never believe that that is earnestness, that distorted face which makes one sick to look at it: no one was ever earnest who had not learned from earnestness that one can also appear too earnest. If it has really become second nature with you to wish to win your enemy, you will also have become so familiar with that kind of problems that they will occupy you merely as stopgaps. If there is constantly in you a fresh influx of love, if the source of this supply is in order, then there is also time to be resourceful. But if there is opposition in the man himself, if in contemplating the law's severe command, he must force himself to go to become reconciled with his enemy: then the matter may easily become too earnest, and fail just because of—overmuch earnestness. But this "great earnestness," however respectable it may be, especially in contrast to irreconcilement, is still not that which we should strive for. No, the true lover is very resourceful.

So the lover also conceals something from the vanquished. But not as the weakly indulgent does, who hides the truth: for the lover hides himself. That he may not disturb the vanquished, he is, as it were, only secretly present, while that which really is present is the lofty majesty of the good and the true. If one is only heedful of it, there is also something so elevated present, that the slight difference between man and man readily disappears. And this is the way that love always behaves. The true lover, who cannot find it in his heart, at any price, to allow the beloved maiden to feel embarrassed, conveys the truth to her in such a way that she does not notice that he is teaching her. He elicits the truth from her; he places it upon her lips; and consequently he does not hear himself, but he hears her speaking it; or he promotes the truth, and conceals himself. Is it then humiliating to her to learn the truth in this way?

And so with the vanquished of whom we are speaking. The expression of pain for the past, the dejection over his offense, the prayer for forgiveness: all these in a certain sense the lover accepts, but he immediately pushes them to one side with a sacred horror, as one puts aside that which is not his due; that is, he indicates that this is not due him; he transfers everything to a higher category, ascribes everything to God, as the one to whom it belongs.

That is the way love always behaves. If the maiden, indescribably happy over the joy she finds in union with the beloved, were to thank him for it, would he not then, if he were a true lover, prevent this trepidation, and say, "No, dear, that is a little misunderstanding, and there must be no misunderstanding between us; you must not thank me, but you must thank God, if this means as much to you as you think. If you do this, then you will be sure of not making any mistake, for even supposing your happiness were not as great as you thought, it would still be a great happiness that you had thanked God for it." This is what is inseparable from all true love: the *sacred* bashfulness. For woman's modesty is beyond the earthly, and in her bashfulness she feels superior, while the converse pains; but the divine bashfulness is caused by the fact that God exists, and in his bashfulness man feels his own humility. As soon as the most remote allusion wishes to recall what modesty is ignorant of, there is bashfulness in the woman; but as soon as a man in relation to another man considers that God exists, then is the divine bashfulness there. One is not bashful before the other man, but before the third who is present; or one is bashful before the other man insofar as one considers what the presence of this third makes the other man. This is true even in human relationships. For when two men are talking together, and the king is present as a third party, but only recognized by one of them, then that one acts somewhat differently, for he is somewhat bashful—before the king. The thought about God's presence makes a man bashful with respect to the other man, for God's presence makes the two essentially equal. As to the rest, whatever difference, humanly speaking, there had been between the two men, even if it were the most glaring: God has it in His power to say: "When I am present no one will presume to be conscious of this difference; for that would be standing and talking with each other before me, as if I were not present."

But when the lover himself is bashful, when he scarcely dares to raise his eyes to look at the vanquished, how can it be so humiliating to be the vanquished? A man is bashful if another looks at him; but if this other, who by looking at him makes him bashful, is himself bashful, then there is no one who looks at him. But if there is no one who looks at him, then there can be nothing humiliating in humbling himself before the good, or before God.

Consequently the lover does not look at the vanquished. This was the first step, in order to prevent humiliation. But in another sense the lover still looks at him. This is the next step.

Oh, that I were able to describe how the lover looks at the vanquished, how the joy shines in his eyes; how his loving glance rests so mildly upon him; how, alluring and beckoning, it seeks to win him! For to the

lover it is so indescribably important that nothing disturbing should enter; that no ill-omened word should inadvertently pass between them; that no unpremeditated glance should accidentally be exchanged between them, which might perhaps disturb everything again for a long time. Thus the lover looks at him; as calm as only the eternal can make a man. For the lover truly wishes to win this vanquished, but this, his wish, is too sacred to have the kind of passion a wish ordinarily has. The mere desire of passion very frequently makes a man a little confused; on the contrary, the purity and sacredness of this wish gives the lover an exalted tranquillity, which again helps him to win the victory of reconciliation, the most beautiful and the most difficult, for mere strength here is not enough, the strength must be in weakness.

But is there anything humiliating in feeling that one is so important to another man? Is there anything humiliating to the girl that the lover solicits her love? Is there anything humiliating to her that it is so evident how much he is interested in winning her? Is there anything humiliating to her in seeing his gladness in advance, if he succeeds? No, there certainly is not. But the lover who by reconciliation would win the vanquished, he is, in a far higher sense, in precisely the same situation in apprehending the other man's love. And the lover knows only too well how difficult it is to free in this way, to set one free from the evil, to free him from the humiliation of defeat, to free him from thinking dejectedly of the forgiveness which he needs: consequently, in spite of all these difficulties, to win his love.

Yet the lover succeeds in winning the vanquished. Everything confusing, every conceivable object is removed as by an enchantment: while the vanquished lays hold on forgiveness, the lover lays hold on the love of the vanquished. Oh, it is not true: that one always gets an answer if one asks; Christianity has also made this proverb untrue, like all the proverbs of human wisdom. For when the vanquished asks, "Have you now really forgiven me?" the lover answers, "Do you now really love me?" But he does not answer the question asked him. No, he does not answer it, he is too loving to do so, he will not even answer the question about forgiveness; for this word, especially if it were emphasized, might easily make the matter too serious, in a harmful sense. Wonderful conversation! There seems to be no meaning in it. The one asks in the east, and the other answers in the west; and yet they say, moreover love understands it, they both say one and the same thing.

But the lover has the last word. For whenever there is an exchange between them, then so the one says, "Have you really forgiven me?" and the other answers, "Do you now really love me?" Behold, nothing, nothing, can hold out against a lover, not even the one who begs forgiveness. At last he will break himself of asking for forgiveness.

So he, the lover, has conquered, for he has won the vanquished.

IX

THE WORK OF LOVE IN REMEMBERING THE DEAD

IF a man for one reason or another fears that he will not be able to keep in mind a general survey of some long and complicated matter, then he tries to secure or obtain a brief epitomization of it as a summary. So death is the briefest epitome of life, or it is life carried back to its shortest form. That is why it has always been so important to those who truly reflect on the meaning of human life, to test very frequently by means of the brief epitome what they have understood about life. For no thinker has such a grasp on life as has death, that powerful thinker, who cannot merely think through every illusion, but can think it in part and as a whole, can think it to nothingness. If then all the manifold ways of life, as you survey them, create a confusion of mind, then go out to the dead, "where all ways meet"—there the survey becomes easy. If your head swims from constantly looking at and hearing about the diversities of life, then go out to the dead; *there* you have power over the differences: between the "kinships of clay" there are no diversities, but only the close kinship. For the fact that all men are blood-relations, hence of one blood, this kinship is frequently denied in life; but that they are of one clay, this kinship of death, no one can deny.

Moreover, go out once more to the dead, in order *there* to get a view of life. That is the way a sharpshooter behaves; he looks for a place where the enemy cannot hit him, but from which he can hit the enemy, and where he can have a perfect position for taking aim. Do not choose the evening hour for your visit, for the tranquillity created by the evening and by an evening spent among the dead, is frequently not far removed from a certain exaltation of mood which strains and "fills one with unrest," and submits new riddles, instead of explaining those already given. No, go out there in the early morning, when the morning sun peeps between the green leaves with changing lights and shadows, when the beauty and friendliness of the sea, when the whistling of the birds and the multitudinous life everywhere almost enable you to forget that you are among the dead. It will be to you as if you had come into a foreign land, which had remained unfamiliar with the confusions and separations of life; in the state of childhood, consisting for the most part of small families. Out here, namely, we may attain that to which we aspire in vain in life: the equal share. Each family has a little plot of earth for itself, of about equal size. The prospect is about the same for all. The sun may happen to shine equally over all; no

building rises so high that it cuts off the rays of the sun or the refreshment of the rain or the fresh gusts of wind or the echo of singing birds, from neighbor or neighbor. No, here the shares are equal. For in life it may certainly happen that at times a family, which has lived in a prosperous abundance, must restrict itself; but in death they are all restricted. A little difference there may be, perhaps the difference of a cubit in the size of the lot, or one family may own a tree, which the other earthly lodger does not have upon his lot. Why do you think this difference is there? Its purpose is, by means of a profound jest, to remind you through its littleness of how great the difference was. So loving is death! For it is precisely love on the part of death, that by the aid of this little difference it reminds you in an elevating jest of how great the difference had been. Death does not say: "There is simply no difference"; it says, "There you can see how great the difference was: a half cubit." If there were not this little difference, then neither would the concept of death be completely reliable. Thus in death life reverts to childishness. In the age of childhood it also made a great difference that one owned a tree, a flower, a stone. And this difference was an anticipation of the differences that would appear in life on quite a different scale. Now life is past, and between the dead a little hint of the difference remains behind which, as in jest, softens the memory of what had been.

Lo, out here is the place to meditate on life; by the aid of the brief epitome, which abbreviates all the complicated extensiveness of the relationship, to get a survey. How then could I, in writing about love, let the opportunity pass to make a test of what love really is? Truly, if you wish to ascertain what love is in yourself or another man, then must you notice how he behaves with respect to the dead. In order to make observations of a man, it is very important, for the sake of the observation, to see him in proportion, to see him by himself. But if a relationship exists between two actual men, so that the two are always seen together, the relationship becomes complicated, and makes the observation of the one alone difficult. This second man, namely, conceals something of the first man, and, furthermore, the second man may have so much influence over the first, that the first man seems to be different from what he actually is. Consequently a twofold appraisal is here necessary; the observer must take into account what influence the second man exercises through his personality, his characteristics, his virtues and his vices, upon the man who is the object of observation. If you should happen to see a man shadow-boxing in earnest, or if you should see a man dancing solo the dance he usually dances with someone else: then you would be able to observe his movements better than if he boxed with another actual man, or if he danced with another

actual man. And if in conversation you understand the art of making yourself a cipher, you best get to know what is in the other man.

Oh, but when a man is related to the dead, then in this relationship there is only one, for the dead man is not a reality. No one, no one can so well make himself into "no one" as the dead, for he is "no one." Hence there can here be no question of any irregularity in the observation; here the living becomes manifest, here he must appear as he absolutely is; for a dead man, aye, he is a subtle man, he has completely withdrawn himself; he has not the slightest influence, either disturbing or abetting, on the living who is related to him. A dead man is no actual object, he is only the occasion which constantly reveals what the living is who is related to him, or which helps to reveal how the living is, who is not related to him.

For we also certainly have duties toward the dead. If we ought to love the men we see, then, too, those we have seen, but see no longer, because death has taken them from us. We should not disturb the dead by lamentations and weeping; we should behave toward the dead as we behave toward one who is sleeping, whom we do not have the heart to awaken, because we hope that he will soon awaken of himself. "Weep then softly over the dead, for he has attained repose," says Sirach; and I know no better way of signifying true remembrance than by this gentle weeping, which does not begin to sob immediately—and soon ceases. No, one should remember the dead, weeping softly, but weeping long. How long cannot be determined in advance, since no one in remembering knows definitely how long he will be separated from the dead. But the one who affectionately remembers the dead, may use some words from David's psalm, where, too, there is talk about remembering, in his "If I forget thee, let my right hand forget its cunning; my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember thee; if I prefer not thee above my chief joy."—Let him only remember that the task does not consist in saying this at once on the first day, but in continuing faithful to himself and to the dead in this mood, even if one is silent about it, which is usually preferable both for the sake of a certain sense of decency and of assurance.

It is a task; and one need not have seen much of life to have seen enough to assure him that it might well be emphasized that there is a task, a duty to be performed, in remembering the dead: the irresponsibility of supercharged human feelings, taken by itself, perhaps never appears greater than in just this relationship. And yet neither this feeling nor its violent expression is therefore false, that is to say, one believes what one says in the moment of speaking, but one satisfies one's self and the passion of his undisciplined emotions by using expressions which bind him in a peculiar way; that is, there is perhaps seldom one

who does not by his later expressions make his first expressions, although they were once true, untrue.

Oh, we speak so often about what a different view of human life we should have if everything was made manifest which life conceals—ah, if death would come out with what it knows about the living: what a terrible contribution to the sum of human knowledge, which at least human love simply does not encourage!

So let us then among the works of love not forget this one, not forget to observe

THE WORK OF LOVE IN REMEMBERING THE DEAD.

*The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the most **disinterested** love.*

If we wish to assure ourselves that love is entirely disinterested, we must remove every possibility of requital. But this is exactly what happens with respect to the dead. If love persists notwithstanding this, then it is in truth disinterested.

Requitals, as regards love, may be very diversified. One may for that matter make it simply a matter of advantage and profit. It is certainly a very general practice, this "heathenish" "loving those who can make requital." A requital in this significance is somewhat different from love itself, it is the heterogeneous. But there is also a requital homogeneous with love: love reciprocated. And there is still so much of good in the great majority of men that they would as a rule regard this requital of gratitude, discernment, renunciation, in short, the requital of love reciprocated, as the most significant one, even if, in another sense, they would not perhaps admit that it is a requital; therefore they would think that one could not call love self-interested because it aspires to this requital.—But the dead make no requital in any sense.

There is in this respect a resemblance between lovingly remembering the dead and the love of parents for their children. The parents love the children almost before they are born, and long before they themselves develop consciousness, hence as non-beings. But a dead man is also a non-being. And these are the two greatest benefactions: to give a human being life, and to remember the dead; however, for the first there is a reciprocity of love, a requital. If the parents simply had no hope, no prospect at all, of sometime having joy in their children and reward for their loving solicitude—still there would certainly be many fathers and mothers who would always lovingly do everything for their children. Oh, but it is also certain that there would be many fathers and mothers whose love would become cold. It is not our intention thereby at once to pronounce such a father or mother as too unloving. No, but the love in

them would still be so weak or the selfishness so strong, that there would be *needed* this joyous hope, this encouraging prospect. And with this hope and this prospect, everything would be all right. The parents can say to each other, "Certainly our little child has many years of life ahead of him; but during all these years we shall be enjoying him, and we hope that he will sometime reward our love, will, if he does nothing else, make our old age happy, as a requital for our care."

The dead, on the contrary, make no requital. The one who lovingly remembers may perhaps also say: "I have a long time before me dedicated to remembering, but the prospect is first and last the same; there is in a certain sense nothing to hinder the prospect, for there is no prospect at all." Oh, it is so hopeless in a certain sense, so ungrateful a task in the sense in which the countryman says it, so disheartening an occupation, to remember the dead! For a dead man does not thrive and grow as the child does, to meet the future: a dead man only molders more and more in certain corruption. A dead man does not gladden the one who remembers, as the child gladdens the mother; does not gladden him as the child gladdens her, when in answer to the question whom it loves best, it answers, "Mother." The dead man loves no one best, he seems to love no one at all. Oh, it is so discouraging that he thus remains quiet down in the grave, while the yearning for him increases; so dispiriting that there can be no thought of any change except that of dissolution, more and more rapid! It is certainly true that he is not difficult as a child may sometimes be; he does not cause sleepless nights, at least not through his difficult behavior—for strangely enough, the good child does not occasion sleepless nights, while, on the contrary, the better the dead man was, the more sleepless nights he occasions. Oh, but even with respect to the difficult child, there is still hope of and a prospect of requital through reciprocated love. But the dead makes no requital at all; whether you are sleepless and expectant on his account, or you absolutely forget him, it seems to be a matter of complete indifference to him.

If you therefore wish to prove whether you love disinterestedly, then sometime pay attention to how you behave toward the dead. Much love, unquestionably the most, if subjected to a sharper testing, would appear to be selfishness. But the fact of the matter is, that in a love-relationship between the living, there is always a hope and a prospect of requital, at least of a reciprocated love; and generally speaking, this is what happens. But this hope, this prospect, together with the requital, produces such an effect that one cannot definitely see what is love and what is selfishness, because one cannot see quite definitely whether requital is expected or not, and in what way. As regards the dead, the observation is so easy. Oh, if men were accustomed to love truly disinterestedly, one would certainly also remember the dead in a different

way from what one ordinarily does, after the first, sometimes a fairly short, interval is past, in which one loves the dead with an extravagant wailing and lamentation.

The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the freest love.

In order really to prove whether love is entirely free, one may remove all that which in any way might force from one the work of love. But this is precisely absent in relation to the dead. If then love, nevertheless, abides, then it is the freest love.

The things which can force the work of love from a man may be very different, and thus cannot be enumerated. The child cries, the poor begs, the widow importunes, regard compels, the wretched brings pressure, and so on. But none of the love in the work which is thus constrained is quite free.

The more insistent the needy are, the less free is the love. We generally take this into consideration concerning the parents' love for the child. If one really desires to describe helplessness, and describe it in its most urgent form, one usually thinks about a tiny babe who lies in all its helplessness, by which *it, as it were, compels* the love of the parents —seems to compel, for actually it compels only the love of the parents who are not what they ought to be. Hence, the tiny babe in all its helplessness! And yet, when a man first lies in the grave with three cubits of earth above him, then he is more helpless than that child!

But the child cries! If the child could not cry—yes, there are still many fathers and mothers who would nevertheless tend it with loving care! Oh, but there would also be many who would at least many times forget the child. It is not our intention just on that account to call such a father or mother unloving; but the love in them is so weak, so selfish, that they need to be reminded of the child's need.

The dead, on the contrary, does not cry like the child; he does not call himself to memory like the needy; he does not importune like the beggar; he does not compel regard; he does not force you by his evident wretchedness; he does not importune you as the widow did the judge: the dead is silent and says not a single word; he remains quite still, he does not move from his place—and perhaps he does not suffer evil! There is no one who troubles a living man less than the dead, and no one easier for the living to avoid than the dead. You can place your child out among strangers in order not to hear its crying; you can say you are not at home to avoid the beggar's plea; you can disguise yourself so that no one will know you: in short, as regards the living, you may adopt many precautionary expedients, which still perhaps will not be completely able to reassure you; but with respect to the dead

you do not need to use the least caution, and yet you are completely certain.

If that is anyone's purpose, if it seems best to him to be quit of the dead, the sooner the better, then he may without any criticism and without being made the object of any lawsuit, become cold almost as soon as the dead man is cold. If it is only from a sense of shame (and then it is not on account of the dead) that he remembers to weep a little in the newspaper on the day of the burial, if he only takes care to show the dead the last honors—for the sake of appearances: then he might as well laugh at the dead in his—no, not before his eyes, for they are now closed. A dead man naturally has no rights at all in life; there is no magistrate who has anything to say about your remembering the dead; no magistrate who mixes into this relationship, as happens sometimes in the relationship between parents and children—and the dead himself certainly takes no step for the purpose of importuning or compelling.—If you therefore wish to prove whether your love is free, then pay attention occasionally as to how, in the course of time, you behave toward the dead.

If it did not seem so much like jesting (which it certainly is not, except for the one who does not know what earnestness is), then I should say we might place as an inscription over the gate to the burial place of the dead, "Here is no compulsion," or "With us is no compulsion." And yet I may well say it, I may well also have said it, and I may well maintain having said it; for I have reflected too much over death not to know that he who does not know before the resurrection from the dead, please note, how to make use of all the subtlety, all the profound playfulness that resides in death, simply cannot speak earnestly about it. Death is not earnest in the same way the eternal is. To the earnestness of death belongs exactly that strange awakening, that consonance of a profound mockery, which torn away from the thought of the eternal, is an empty often an impudent jest, but which in conjunction with the thought of the eternal, is precisely what it ought to be, and very different from the vapid earnestness which least of all lays hold on any thought involving such suspense as does the thought of death.

Oh, there is so much said in the world about the fact that love must be free; that one cannot love where there is the least coercion; that with respect to love, there simply must be nothing forced: oh, well, let us see then, when it comes to the point, how it stands with free love—how the dead is remembered in love! for a dead man plainly does not compel. Moreover, at the moment of separation, when one cannot do without the dead, then there is lamentation. Is this the much discussed free love? Is this love for the dead? And then little by little, gradually as the dead molders away, so too the memory crumbles away between

the fingers; one does not know what became of it; little by little one becomes free of this—difficult remembering. But to become free in this way, is this the free love, is this love for the dead? The proverb says, "Out of sight, out of mind." And one can always be certain that a proverb is right about worldly matters. It is another thing that from the Christian standpoint, every proverb is untrue.

If it were true, all this which is said about free love, that is, if it happened, if it were carried into effect, if men were accustomed to love in this way, then men would also love the dead differently from the way they do. But the fact is that with respect to other human love, there is so frequently some compulsion, if no other, then the daily sight and habit, and therefore one cannot definitely see how far it is the love that freely holds its object fast, or how far it is the object which in one way or another, compels assistance. But with respect to the dead, everything is manifest. Here there is nothing, no compulsion at all. On the contrary, the loving memory of the dead has to defend itself against the actuality about one, so that it does not through ever new impressions, get complete power to erase the memory; and it has to defend itself against time: in short, it has to defend its own freedom in remembering against that which wishes to compel one to forget. And the power of time is great. Perhaps one does not notice it in time, for time cunningly steals from one a little at a time; one will not perhaps really realize this before eternity, when one wishes to look around and back to see what one has got together with the help of time and his forty years. Yes, time is a dangerous power; it makes it so easy to begin again from the beginning in time, and so to forget where one left off. When therefore one even merely begins to read a very large book and does not really trust his memory, he places a mark in it: oh, but how often a man forgets throughout his whole life, to place markers so that he will really be able to find his place! And now in the course of years, to be obliged to remember the dead—alas, while he does nothing at all to help one; rather, if he does anything, or by simply doing nothing, he does everything to show one how completely indifferent he is about it! In the meantime the manifold demands of life beckon to one; the living beckon to one and say: "Come to us, we will love you." The dead, on the contrary, cannot beckon; even if he wished to, he cannot beckon, he can do nothing at all to attract our attention, he cannot move a finger; he lies and molders—how easy for the power of life and of the moment to win over such impotence! Oh, there is no one so helpless as a dead man, while in his helplessness he also has not the slightest compulsion! And therefore there is no other love so free as the work of love which *remembers* a dead man—for remembering him is somewhat different from at first not being able to forget him.

The work of love in remembering the dead is a work of the most faithful love.

In order really to test whether a man's love is steadfast, one must remove everything whereby the object might in anyway help him to be steadfast. But all this simply does not apply with respect to the dead where there is no *actual* object. If then love persists, this is the most faithful love.

There is so much said about the lack of faithfulness in the love between men. So then the one places the fault on the other and says: "It was not I who changed, it was he who changed." Well! And what then? Did you then remain unchanged? "No, I naturally resented it, so then I changed." We shall not pause here to explain how meaningless this presumable resentment is, by which it follows as a matter of course that I change *because* another changes. No, we are speaking about the relation to the dead, and here we cannot say that it was the dead who was changed. If a change enters into this relationship, it must be I who changed. If you therefore wish to prove whether you love faithfully, then give heed to how you behave toward the dead.

But this is how it is: it is truly a difficult task to maintain one's self unchanged in time. And also the truth is that men love to deceive themselves with all kinds of illusions more than they love either the living or the dead. Oh, how many are not firmly convinced, so firmly they are willing to die for it, that if the other had not changed, they too would have remained unchanged. But if that is true, then is anyone living absolutely unchanged as regards the dead? Oh, there is perhaps no relation in which the change is so noticeable, so great, as the one between the living and the dead—while it still continues to be true that the dead man is not the one who changes.

When two persons are united in love, then the one lays hold on the other, and the union lays hold on both. But with the dead man no union is possible. In the first moment following death, he may perhaps be said to lay hold on one, a consequence of the union, and therefore it is most frequently the case that he is generally remembered at this time. In the course of time, on the contrary, he has no hold upon the living; and the relation ceases unless the living holds to him. But what is faithfulness? Is it steadfastness that another clings to me?

When then death separates the two, the survivor—faithful in the first moment, swears that "he will never forget the dead." Oh, how reckless! For truly, a dead man is a cunning man to talk with, except that his cunning is not like that of the one about whom we say: "One can't always find him where one left him"; for the cunning of the dead consists precisely in the fact that we cannot get him away from the place where we left him. We are often tempted to believe that men have

the idea that one can say almost anything one wishes to a dead man, because he is dead, hears nothing and answers nothing. And yet, yet, be most cautious of all in what you say to the dead. You may perhaps say quite calmly to a living man, "I shall never forget you." And then when some years have passed, then it is to be hoped that you have both fortunately forgotten the whole affair—at least it will be more seldom that you will be unlucky enough to meet a less forgetful man. But be cautious about the dead! For the dead is a man finished and decided; he is not like the rest of us, still in search of adventures, in which we may experience many exciting events, and seventeen times forget what we have said. When you say to a dead man, "I shall never forget you," then it is as if he answered, "Good! Rest assured that I shall never forget that you have said this." And even if all your contemporaries were to assure you that he has forgotten it, you will never hear that from the mouth of the dead. No, he goes to his own place—but he is not *changed*. You cannot say to a dead man that it was he who had become older, and that this explains your changed relation to him—for a dead man does not become older. Nor can you say to a dead man that it was he who in the course of time became cold—for he is not colder than he was when you were so warm; nor that it was because he had become more ill-favored that you could no longer love him—for he has not essentially become more ill-favored than when he was a handsome corpse, which yet is not regarded as an object of love; nor that it was he who had become interested in others—for a dead man does not associate with others. No, whether you are willing to begin again where you left off or not, a dead man begins with the most punctilious exactness just there where you left off. For a dead man is, although one does not notice it, a strong man: he has the strength of unchangeableness. And a dead man is a proud man. Have you not noticed that a proud man, precisely in relation to the man he despises most, takes the most pains not to betray anything, to appear entirely unchanged, to pretend to be unconscious of everything, in order to allow the despised to sink lower and lower—for the proud man only benevolently calls the attention of the one he loves to his error, in order by so doing to help him to the right! Oh, but a dead man—who is so proudly able as he to betray nothing at all, even if he despises the living who forgets him and the parting words—a dead man even does everything to bring about his own oblivion. The dead does not come to you and remind you; he does not look at you in passing; you never meet him; and if you met him and looked at him, there is no involuntary expression in his face which against his will might betray what he thinks and judges about you; for a dead man has his countenance under control. Truly we should guard against conjuring forth the dead in a poetic way in order to call him to remem-

brance: the most fearful thing of all is that the dead betrays nothing at all. Fear therefore the dead, fear his shrewdness, fear his determination, fear his strength, fear his pride! But if you love him, then remember him affectionately, and you will have no reason to fear; you will learn from the dead, and precisely from him as the dead, the shrewdness of thought, the definiteness of expression, the strength of unchangeableness, the pride of life, as you could learn it from no man, not even the most richly endowed.

The dead man does not change; there is no thought of any possible excuse through shoving the guilt onto him. Hence he is steadfast. Yes, that is true; but he has no actuality, and he therefore does nothing, simply nothing, to retain his hold on you, except that he does not change. If, then, any change enters into the relation between the living and the dead, then it must be clear that it is the living who has changed. If, on the contrary, no change enters, then it is the living who has truly been faithful, faithful in lovingly remembering him—alas, while he could do nothing to hold you; alas, while he was doing everything as if to pretend that he had entirely forgotten you, and what you said to him. For no one who has actually forgotten what has been said to him, can express more definitely that he has forgotten it, that its entire relation to him, that the whole matter, is forgotten, than the dead man can.

The work of love in remembering the dead is thus a work of the most disinterested, the freest, the most faithful love. So go out, then, and do this; remember the dead, and just by so doing learn to love the living, disinterestedly, freely, faithfully. In your relation to the dead you have a standard by which you can test yourself. The one who employs this standard will easily reduce the extensiveness of the most complicated relationship, and will learn to be repelled by all the mass of excuses actuality usually has immediately at hand for the purpose of showing that it is the other who is selfish, the other who is himself guilty of being forgotten, because he did not call himself to mind, the other who is faithless. Remember the dead; then you have a foretaste of the blessing which is inseparable from this work of love, also the best guidance in rightly understanding life: that it is a duty to love the men we do not see, but likewise those we do see. Our duty to love the men we see cannot cease because death separates them from us, for the duty is eternal; but hence the duty toward the dead cannot so separate our contemporaries from us that these do not become the object of our love.

X

THE WORK OF LOVE IN RECOMMENDING LOVE

"ART consists in deeds, not words." This is a proverbial remark which is also quite true if one reasonably excludes the accidental circumstance where the art really consists in "saying it." For it would certainly be strange were anyone to deny that the poet's art consists precisely in "saying it," since truly not everyone can say that which the poet says *in such a way* that he thereby proves himself to be a poet. This is also partly true about the art of speaking.

But in relation to love, it is neither wholly nor partly true that the art consists in saying it, or that to be able to say it in any essential way, is conditioned by the accidental endowment. That is why it is so edifying to speak about love, because one must constantly think and say to one's self: "Everyone can love," or, "Everyone ought to be able to love"—while it would be a strange way of speaking to say that everyone was or could become a poet. Love which overcomes all differences, which loosens all bonds, in order to bind everything together in the bond of love, must naturally take loving heed that here a certain kind of difference does not suddenly and contentiously assert itself.

Because the matter stands thus, because there is no "art" in recommending love, just therefore does loving constitute a work; for "art" is related to the accidental endowment; the work is related to the universal. So the proverb may find its application in a peculiar manner. Thus if one should in a hasty, casual remark, in a hasty proposition (which seems especially acceptable to these times), say, "It would be a good thing if someone were to undertake to recommend love," one would have to answer that, "Saying it is no art, but doing it"—and that although "doing it" in this connection would indicate that saying it, as has been proved with reference to love, is no art, and so consequently it is art and yet not art, but a deed. The proof then consists in working out such a recommendation of love as to require both time and diligence. If it were an art to recommend love, the relationship would not be such. For with respect to a certain kind of art, it is truly not given to everyone to practice it, even if he is willing to spend both time and diligence in acquiring it. Love, on the other hand, oh, it is not like art, jealous of itself, and therefore poured out only on the few. Everyone who wishes to have love, to him it is given, and if he is willing to assume the task of recommending it, he will also succeed.

So let us now consider

THE WORK OF LOVE IN RECOMMENDING LOVE.

It is a work, and naturally a work of love, for it can only be performed in love, more precisely defined, in love of the truth. We shall endeavor to be more explicit as to how this work may be accomplished.

The work of recommending love must be done ***inwardly*** *in self-denial.*

If the recommending of love is to be performed effectually, then one must for a long time stick to thinking one thought, to holding it, spiritually understood, in the strictest continence with respect to everything heterogeneous, alien, irrelevant and disturbing; must stick to it with the most punctilious and obediently exact renunciation of every other thought. But this is very exhausting. That way it is easy enough to disavow the meaning and, in this connection, the understanding of the thought; and that will also be the case if the single thought which occupies one is a particular finite conception, not one infinite thought. But if it is also the one thought which saves and preserves the understanding, it is still very exhausting. Consequently, to think a single thought in inwardness away from all distraction, to advance from month to month in making the hand stronger and stronger which stretches the thread of thought; and then, on the other side, in rising to learn always more obediently, more humbly to make the hand lighter and more supple in guidance, the hand which at any second, if necessary, must relax and ease the tension, consequently with mounting passion to grasp more and more firmly, more and more certainly, and in increasing humility be able, if the moment makes it necessary, to let go more and more easily: that is very exhausting. And yet we cannot conceal from one that this is the one thing needful, nor can we conceal it from one if one does it; for when one thinks but one thought, the direction is inward.

It is one thing to think in such a way that one's attention is always directed outward toward the object, which is something external; it is another thing to have one's thoughts so reversed that one is at every moment conscious of himself, conscious of the effect of the thought, or how the thought affects his own condition. But only the latter is essentially thinking, that is, clarity of thought. The first is unclear thinking, which suffers from the contradiction that the reflection which clarifies another thought is in the final analysis itself confused. Such a thinker explains another by his thinking, and, lo, he does not understand himself. As far as an external object of thought is concerned, he makes a very profound use of his natural abilities, but as regards inwardness, a very superficial use, and therefore all his thinking, however profound

it may seem, is still at bottom superficial. But when the object of one's reflection is externally complicated, or when one transforms that of which he is thinking into an erudite object of reflection, or when one leaps from one subject of thought to another, then one does not discover this last irregularity: that at the bottom of all the clarity there lies a lack of clarity, instead of the true clarity alone being brought to light. If, on the contrary, one has but one thought, then there is no external object, then one's thoughts are directed inward in self-absorption, then one must discover his own inner condition; and at first this discovery is very humiliating. The forces of the human spirit do not behave in the same way as do physical forces. If one overstrains his physical strength he is injured, and thereby he gains nothing. But, if one, simply by choosing inwardness, does not exert his spiritual forces, as such, to the limit, he simply does not discover, at least not in the deeper sense, that God exists; and if this is so, then he has lost the thing of greatest importance, or the most important thing has essentially eluded him. In physical strength, as such, there is nothing selfish, but in the human spirit, as such, there lies a selfishness which must be humbled, if the God-relationship is to be gained in truth. This, then, is what the one must experience who concentrates upon a single thought; he must experience the intrusion of interruptions wherein it is as if everything were taken from him; he must encounter the perils of life where it holds good about losing one's life in order to save it. He must go forward on this way, if he is to bring anything deeper to light. If he shies away from this difficulty, then his thought becomes superficial—although in these clever times men have certainly assumed between themselves, although without referring it to God or the eternal, that such an exertion is not necessary, moreover, that it is an eccentricity. Now of course it is not needed in order to lead a comfortable and irresponsible life, or to satisfy his own contemporaries with the admired perfection which to a T absolutely resembles that of everyone else. But nevertheless it is certain that without being tested in this difficulty and without this strenuous exertion, one's thought becomes superficial. For spiritually understood it is true that not until a man has overexerted his spiritual strength as such, can he become an instrument; he will from that moment, if he endures in sincerity and faith, gain his greatest strength; but it is not his own strength, he acquires it in his *self-abnegation.*

Oh, I do not know to whom I may be speaking concerning this matter, how far there is anyone who is concerned about such things; but this I do know, that such people have lived, and I know this, that just those who have effectually recommended love have been people well-trained and able-bodied in these, for the most part, unfamiliar waters. And to them I can write, comforting myself with the beautiful word

"Write!" "For whom?" "For the dead, for those whom you have loved in the past!"—and in loving them I shall also meet together with the dearest among my contemporaries.

If one concentrates upon but one thought, one must in relation to it consider discovering self-denial, and it is the self-denial which discovers that God exists. Just this becomes the contradiction in blessedness and in terror: to have an all-powerful one as one's collaborator. For an all-powerful one cannot be your collaborator, the collaborator of a man, without this signifying that you can do nothing at all. And, on the other hand, if He is your assistant, then you can do everything. The exhaustive thing is that there is at once a contradiction, so that you do not experience the one today, the other tomorrow; and it is exhausting that this contradiction is not something you can be conscious of at intervals, but it is something you must be conscious of at every moment. It is at the very moment when you are able to do everything—and a selfish thought creeps in, as if it were you who had been able to do all this—at that very moment you may lose everything; and at the very moment the selfish thought is surrendered, you may again have everything. But God is not seen; and consequently when God uses this instrument, into which man made himself by his self-denial, then it looks as if it were the instrument which could do everything, and even the instrument is tempted to understand it in this way—until he can again do nothing. It is always difficult to collaborate with another man. Oh, but to collaborate with the Almighty! Moreover, it is easy enough to understand in a certain sense; for what [I] cannot do, I can leave to Him. Consequently the difficulty is just that I must collaborate, if not with another, then through constantly understanding that I can do nothing at all, which is not something which can be understood once for all.

And this is difficult to understand, not difficult to understand at the moment when one can really do nothing, when one is sick or indisposed, but to understand just at the moment when one can apparently do everything. However, there is nothing so swift as thought, and nothing which strikes one with such force as a thought when it comes upon one. And now, out on the sea of thought, on the "70,000 fathoms deep"—before one learns when night comes to be able to sleep tranquilly *away from* the thoughts, confident that God who is love, has them in abundance, and to be able to awake in full confidence *to* the thoughts, assured that God has not slept! A mighty oriental emperor had a servant whose duty it was daily to remind him of a certain definite undertaking: but that a humble man should be able to reverse the relation and say to God the Almighty, "Remind me finally of this or that"; and that then God should do it! Is not this enough to make one lose one's reason, that a

man should have the right to sleep safely and sweetly if he only says to God, like the emperor to his servant, "Be sure to remind me of this or that!" But then again this Almighty is so jealous for Himself that merely a selfish word in this foolhardy freedom which He allows, and everything is lost; so that God does not only not remember this and that, but it is as if He would never forget the this and that which is deserved. No, then it is far safer to be able to do a little less, and so in a common human wisdom imagine that one is certain one can do it; it is far safer than this exhausting: absolutely and to the letter being able to do nothing, and, on the contrary, in a certain figurative sense, being able to do everything.

Still only in self-denial can a man completely recommend love; for God is love, and only in self-abnegation can a man hold God fast. What a man learns from himself about love is very superficial; he must learn from God to know it more profoundly, that is, he must in his self-abnegation become what every man may become (for self-denial is related to the universal, and thus different from being specially called and chosen), an instrument of God. So every man can get to know everything about love, just as every man can get to know that he, like every other man, is loved by God. The difference is merely that some (which does not seem so surprising to me) find this thought more than sufficient for the longest life, so that even in their seventieth year they do not think they have wondered enough over it; and others, on the contrary (which seems to me very strange and deplorable), find this thought so insignificant, since being loved by God is nothing more than is true of every man—as if it were therefore less important.

Only in self-abnegation can a man completely recommend love. No poet can do it. The poet can sing about love and friendship, which is indeed a rare gift, but "the poet" cannot recommend love. For to the poet his relation to the spirit of inspiration is like a jest, the evocation of its assistance is like a jest (and this might well correspond to the self-denial and the prayer). His natural endowment, on the other hand, is the decisive thing, and the outcome of his relation to the spirit of inspiration is to him the principal thing, it is the poem, the poetical production, which determines the outcome. But for the one who will recommend love (which, since everyone may do this, indicates no superiority), the relation of the self-abnegation to God or the laying hold on God in self-abnegation, ought to be everything, ought to be the earnest thing; the fact of whether the production is finished or not, ought to be a jest, that is, the God-relationship itself ought to be more important to him than the outcome. And in his self-abnegation it is his absolutely earnest conviction that it is God who helps him.

Oh, if a man in his self-abnegation could really put away all the

sensual illusion of being able himself to do anything; if he could really understand that of himself he can do nothing at all; that is, if a man could really win the victory of self-denial, and then to that victory add the triumph of self-denial, in sincerity and truth finding his entire happiness in this self being able to do nothing at all: what a wonderful speech such a man would be able to make about love! For in the extreme exertion of self-denial, in all this swooning and fainting of its own strength in being happy, in feeling itself happy, what is this other than loving God in truth? But God is love. Who then is better able to recommend love than the one who truly loves God?—for he lays hold on his object in the only right way: he lays hold on God and on loving Him in truth.

This is the inward condition or way in which love must be recommended. To perform this has naturally its own reward in itself, even if, in addition, it also has as its object the winning of men to it by recommending love as far as it is possible; to make men really attentive to what in reconciliation is granted every man, namely, the Highest. For one who recommends art and science still sows the dissension of endowment and non-endowment between men. But he who recommends love, reconciles all, not in a common poverty, nor in a common mediocrity, but in the loftiest fellowship.

The work of recommending love must be done **outwardly** *in devoted disinterestedness.*

Through self-abnegation a man gains the power to become the instrument when he inwardly makes himself into nothing before God; through devoted disinterestedness he makes himself outwardly into nothing, into an unprofitable servant: inwardly he does not become self-important, for he is nothing; nor outwardly does he become self-important, for he is nothing; he is nothing before God—and he does not forget that he is before God, wherever he is. Oh, it may happen that a man fails at the last moment, in that he, truly humble before God, when he approaches men, becomes proud of what he can do. It is then a temptation of comparison which causes his fall. He understood that he could not compare himself with God, before whom he was conscious of being nothing; but in comparison with men he still seems to be something. That is to say, he forgets the self-abnegation, he is ensnared in a delusion, as if he were only at certain hours in the presence of God, just as one at a particular hour has audience with the royal majesty. What a distressing confusion! For with respect to a man it is certainly feasible to speak with him in one way in his presence, and in a quite different way about him in his absence. But could one speak about God—in His absence? This correctly understood is, then, devoted disinterestedness, one and the same thing as the self-abnegation.

It would also be the most terrible contradiction if anyone wished to dominate another—through recommending love.—So the devoted disinterestedness is in a certain sense, that is, inwardly understood, a natural consequence of the self-abnegation, or it is one with the self-abnegation.

But outwardly the devoted disinterestedness is necessary if love is to be truly recommended; and this is truly a work of love to wish to recommend love in the love of truth. One can easily enough secure his earthly advantage, and what is most distressing of all, gain the support of men in proclaiming all kinds of deception. But truly this is not loving. For the opposite is loving: in love for the truth and for men to be willing to make every sacrifice in order to proclaim the truth, and conversely not to be willing to make the least sacrifice of the truth.

The true must essentially be regarded as in conflict with this world; the world has never been so good, and will never become so good, that the majority will desire the truth, or have the true conception of it in such a way that its proclamation must consequently immediately gain the support of everyone. No, he who will proclaim some truth in truth, must prepare himself in some other way than by the help of such a foolish expectation; he must be willing essentially to relinquish the immediate. Even an apostle may well say that he strives "to persuade men," but still with the added phrase, "but before God are we all made manifest." So there is then least of all in these words any thought of the selfish or cowardly, timorous craving to gain the assistance of men —as if it would be the assistance of men which should decide whether something was true or not. No, before God the apostle is made manifest when he seeks to persuade men; consequently he does not wish to win them for himself, but for the truth. As soon as he sees that he can win them in such a way that they become attached to him, but misunderstand him, misrepresent his teachings, then he wishes immediately to repel them—in order to win them. Consequently he does not wish to have any advantage for himself in winning them, but he wishes at all costs, hence even at the sacrifice of their assistance, to win them to the truth—if he succeeds; it is this he wishes. Therefore the same apostle says in another place, "So we speak, not as wishing to please men, but God. Neither did we use flattering words, nor a cloak of covetousness; nor did we seek honor of men, neither of you nor of others, when we might have been burdensome to you, as apostles of Christ." How much devotion do not these words conceal! He had not sought any advantage, had not allowed himself to be paid, not even so much as he might rightly have demanded, as an apostle of Christ; he had renounced their respect, their assistance, their devotion. Impoverished he had exposed himself to their misjudgment, their ridicule: and all this he had done—in order to win

them. Moreover, it is certainly permissible to do everything in this way, even if it were to be executed, for the sake of winning men; for it is precisely in self-sacrifice and disinterestedness to abandon all immediate means, through which one gains the immediate—and loses the truth. The apostle stands on the solid foundation of the eternal; it is he who will gain men by the forces of the eternal in self-sacrifice. It is not the apostle, who in order himself to endure, needs them, and therefore pounces upon the first that offers the cleverest method, in order to win them—not in order to win them to the truth, for such methods cannot be used for this purpose.

And now in these times; how greatly do we need this disinterestedness; in these times when everything is done to make everything immediate, and the immediate everything! For is not everything done to make the immediate as predominant as possible, predominant over the eternal, over the true? Is not everything done to make the immediate so self-satisfied in an almost superior unconsciousness of God and the eternal; so conceited in a presumed possession of all truth; so arrogant in the idea of being the inventor of truth! How many better men have not submitted to the power of the immediate and thereby made the immediate even worse. For just the one who would be a better man, when he weakly or selfishly gives way, must then in the tumult of the immediate seek oblivion for his failure; he must now work with all his might to make the immediate even more conceited.

Alas, the age of thinkers seems to be past! The quiet patience, the humble and obedient longing, the exalted relinquishment of immediate results, the remoteness of infinity from the immediate, his thought and his God-devoted love, which are needed in order to think one thought alone: these seem to have disappeared, they have become almost a laughingstock to men. "Man is" has again become "the measure of all things," and entirely in the sense of the immediate. All communication must be planned to appear conveniently in a trivial pamphlet, or to be supported by untruth in untruth. Moreover, it is as if finally all communication must be so planned that it may be delivered in an hour at most, to an audience which also wastes half an hour in its expressions of approval or disapproval, and during the other half hour is too excited to concentrate its thoughts. And yet we aim at this as the highest. Children are trained to regard this as best: to be catechized and congratulated in the space of an hour. Thus the standard of what a man ought to be is degraded. There is no more said about the highest, about being acceptable unto God, as the apostle says, or about pleasing those glorious ones who have lived in the past, or about pleasing the few eminent ones who are your contemporaries: no, to satisfy in a single hour a mixed assembly of the outstanding, the best men brought together, who too

have not had time or opportunity to reflect on the truth, and who consequently demand superficial half-truths if they are to reward with their assistance: this is their aspiration. That is to say, in order to make it fairly worth while aspiring to, we help with a little falsehood; we delude ourselves into thinking that those assembled are truly wise, that every assembly is composed only of the wise. It is exactly as it was in the time of Socrates, according to the accusation brought against him: "Everyone understood how to instruct the young men; there was but one single individual who did not understand it—that was Socrates." So in our time, "all" are wise, there is only a single individual here and there, who is a fool. So near is the world to having achieved perfection that now "all" are wise; if it were not for the individual cranks and fools the world would be absolutely perfect.

Through all this, God sits and waits in heaven. No one longs to be away from the noise and clamor of the moment in order to find the stillness in which God dwells. While man admires man, and admires him—because he is just like everyone else, no one longs for the solitude wherein one worships God. No one disdains this cheap intermission from aiming at the highest, by longing for the standard of the eternal! So important has the immediate itself become. It is for this reason that sacrificial disinterestedness is needed. Oh, that I might in truth present such a disinterested figure! But here is not the place for this, where the speech is really about the task of recommending love—and therefore here is another wish: would that the immediate, if such a figure should be forthcoming, might have time to contemplate him!

But what applies to all love of the truth in relation to the immediate, also applies to what concerns it, the recommending of love in truth. Before one attempts to secure the assistance of the immediate for his recommendation of love, one must first ascertain how far the immediate has a true understanding of love. Has the immediate, as it is now, or can the immediate ever have a true conception of what love is? No, it is impossible. Love in the understanding of the moment, or of the immediate is neither more nor less than selfishness. Consequently it is selfish to speak thus about love, and selfish to gain this assistance. True love is the self-denying love. But what is self-denial? It consists precisely in renouncing the immediate and immediacy. But then is it entirely impossible to gain the assistance of the immediate—through a true discussion of the love, which is precisely the true love, by renouncing the immediate? It is impossible, it is so impossible that the speaker, that is, if the truth is more important to him than the assistance of the immediate, owes it to himself to point out the misunderstanding; insofar he might chance to gain the assistance of the immediate. From this discussion it is also easy to see that the conclusion is by no means correct, which with-

out further ceremony concludes: He who recommends love, must himself be or come to be loved—in a world which crucified the One who was love, in a world which has persecuted and exterminated so many witnesses of love.

And have the circumstances even changed in this respect, even if it is no longer carried to the extreme and decisive limits whereby witnesses of the truth must sacrifice their lives and blood? Essentially the world has not become better, it is only a little less passionate and more petty. Therefore that which the world generally calls being kind, eternity will naturally regard as something reprehensible and culpable. What the world calls a kind man is a man who above all takes care not to take the demand of eternity or of God for an essential and essentially strenuous existence, too literally. The kind man knows all about all possible excuses and evasions and doctrines of prudence; about bargaining and haggling and throwing off; and so he is kind enough to spare a little of his shrewdness to others, by whose help he thereupon arranges his life to his own advantage, easily and comfortably. In the company of the kind man everything is so safe, so pleasing; no occasion ever leads him to consider that anything eternal exists, or what claim this eternal has on the life of every man, or that the eternal lies so near that the claim might concern this very day. This is the kind man. But that man is unkind who, without demanding anything of another, but by seriously and strictly demanding much of himself, nevertheless draws attention to the fact that such a demand exists. In his company the excuses and evasions do not look so good; everything which one lives for is seen in an objectionable light; one cannot really be comfortable in his company; even less does he by means of the worldly or even the comfortably-religious indulgence, help one to adjust his comfortable pillow.

But what really is this kindness? It is treachery toward the eternal. That is why the temporal existence likes it so well. And this is why the world is always scandalized by the statement that "love to God is hatred of the world." If, namely, the claim of eternity is really valid, then it looks as if such a man hated everything which the majority of men live for. How disturbing therefore, how strange, how disagreeable! How agreeable, on the other hand, and how lovable to confirm and assist men in their cherished errors. But is it, then, love to deceive men? Is it therefore certain that it is love because the deceived regard it as love, because they thank the deceiver as if he were their greatest benefactor? Is it love to love in a deception, and to be loved in return in a deception? I thought that love was: being willing to make every personal sacrifice in communicating the truth, but being unwilling to sacrifice the least fragment of the truth.

However, even if we wished to forget actuality, to forget how the

world is and poetically transfer the whole relationship into the realm of the imagination: it lies in the very nature of the case that in the *relation between man and man,* disinterestedness is needed in order truly to recommend love. Let us venture on such a poetic attempt where we have nothing at all to do with the real world, but where merely in the remoteness of thought we survey the thought of recommending love. If, poetically understood, a man should speak quite truly about the true love, then is a reduplication necessary: the *speaker must transform himself into the selfish, and the content of the speech must be about loving the unlovable object.* But if this is done, it is impossible to have any advantage from recommending love; for one can only gain an advantage when either the speaker is regarded as the lover, or the content of the speech is the ingratiating speech about loving the lovable object. And when there is no advantage to be gained through recommending love, then it is disinterested to do it.

Consider that simple wise man of antiquity who knew best of anyone how to speak of the love that loves the beautiful and the good. He was in fact the ugliest man in the whole country, the ugliest man among the most beautiful people. One would think that this fact might have deterred him from talking about the love which loves the beautiful—one certainly avoids speaking of the noose in the hangman's house, and even the beautiful avoid speaking about beauty in the presence of the exceptionally ugly, to say nothing of the ugly himself talking about it. But, no, Socrates was odd and peculiar enough to find this amusing and inspiring, consequently odd and peculiar enough to put himself in the most disadvantageous position possible. For when he spoke about the beautiful, when in his longing for the beautiful his speech and thought completely carried his hearer away—and then this person happened accidentally to look at him: then he at once became as ugly as he already was, he who was already the ugliest man of all his people. The more he talked, the more beautifully he talked about beauty, the uglier he himself became by contrast. He must have been an eccentric, this wise man; he must not only have been the ugliest but also the most peculiar man among his people. Or what could have determined him to do this? I think if he had had a beautiful nose (which he did not have, strikingly conspicuous among the Greeks who all had beautiful noses), then he would not have wished to say even a single word about loving the beautiful; it would have been impossible for him for fear lest someone might believe that he was speaking about himself, or at least about his beautiful nose. That would have grieved his soul, as if he were defrauding the subject of his speech, beauty, of which he was speaking, by calling some attention to his own beauty. But in his assurance of being the ugliest man, he believed that he could with a good conscience say

everything, everything, everything in praise of beauty, without the least advantage to himself from so doing, he who merely became uglier and uglier by contrast.

Still the love which loves the beautiful is not the true love, which is self-denying love. With this in mind the speaker must now, if everything is to be in order and poetically perfected, make himself into the selfish, the self-lover. To recommend the self-denying love and then even to wish to be the lover is, yes, it is a lack of self-abnegation. If the speaker is not selfish, then he easily becomes uncertain or false; he will either be tempted to take advantage of the recommendation, which thus defeats the purpose of the speech, or he will suffer from a kind of embarrassment, so that he will not dare to say everything about how glorious this love is, for fear that someone might believe that he was speaking about himself. But if the speaker is selfish, or, in order to perfect the poetic thought, if he is the most selfish among a people which admiring speakers call a people of love, then, certainly then, he can speak freely about the self-denying love, more happy in having made himself into the most selfish man than that simple wise man was in being the ugliest. Under actual conditions a long preparation would certainly be needed to enable one to speak of the self-denying love. But the preparation would not consist in reading many books, or in being honored and respected by everyone for his celebrated self-denial (if it is ordinarily possible for one to show self-denial by doing that which *everyone* understands as being self-denial on his part), but conversely, in changing himself into the selfish, to accomplish it by coming to be regarded as the most selfish. And this would still not be very easy to accomplish. The fact of being distinguished through a test and the fact of acquiring the lowest character, absolutely the lowest, are about equally difficult, so there is really an equally large number of both. This, concerning the speaker.

But the content of the speech should be: about loving the unlovable. Behold that simple wise man of antiquity, who knew how to speak so beautifully about loving the beautiful; he sometimes made a different kind of speech when he talked about *loving the ugly*. He did not deny that love consists in loving the beautiful, but yet he spoke, in fact it was a kind of joke, about loving the ugly. What then are we to understand by "the beautiful"? "The beautiful" is the immediate and direct object of the immediate love, the choice of inclination and passion. One certainly does not need to command one to love the beautiful. But the ugly! That is not something to offer inclination and passion, which turn away and say, "Is that anything to love!" And then again, what, according to our conception of love, is "the beautiful"? It is the beloved and the friend. For the beloved and the friend are the immediate and simple objects of the immediate love, the choice of inclination

and passion. And what is "the ugly"? It is "the neighbor," whom one must love. One must love him; this is something that simple wise man knew nothing about; he did not know that the neighbor existed, and that one ought to love him. The fact that he talked about loving the ugly was merely jesting. The neighbor is the unlovable object, is not something to invite inclination or passion, which turn away from him and say, "Is that anything to love!" But therefore there is no advantage to be gained by speaking about the duty of loving the unlovable. And yet true love is exactly love for the neighbor, or, it is not the fact of finding the lovable object, but the fact of finding the unlovable object lovable. If, then, in order that something absolutely true may be said about the true love, the speaker must have transformed himself into the selfish, and the content of his speech must be about loving the unlovable object: then no advantage or benefit is possible. The speaker does not even have love as a reward, for his selfishness only becomes more manifest by the contrast; and the content of the speech is not adapted to ingratiating itself with men, who really wish to hear about what inclination and passion so easily and readily understand, but who are not willing to listen to that which is in no way acceptable to inclination and passion.

However, this poetic experiment is quite proper, and among other results may perhaps serve to throw light on a deception or misunderstanding which has certainly appeared repeatedly throughout Christendom. A man takes the Christian humility and self-denial in vain because, although no doubt he denies himself in one respect, he does not have the courage to do it decisively, for which reason he takes care to have his humility and self-denial recognized; consequently he becomes respected and honored for his humility and self-denial—which, after all, is not self-abnegation.

Consequently, in order to be able to recommend love, *inward* self-abnegation and *outward* sacrificing disinterestedness are both required. Therefore if one undertakes to recommend love, and the question is asked whether he really does it from love, then the answer must be, that "this is something that no one can definitely decide; it is possible that it is vanity, pride, in short, evil, but it is also possible that it is love."

CONCLUSION

IN the preceding treatise we have endeavored "many times and in many ways" to recommend love. As we thank God that we have succeeded in finishing the work we wished to do, we shall in our conclusion introduce the apostle John who says: "In love, let us love one another." These words, which consequently have apostolic authority, have also, if you reflect on them, a mediating sound, a mediating mood in relation to the contradictions in love itself, which may be due to the fact that they are spoken by a man who became perfect in love. In these words you do not hear the austerity of duty; the apostle does not say, "You *shall* love one another"; but neither do you hear poetic passion or the violence of affection. There is something transfigured and blessed in these words, but there is also a sadness which touches upon life and is softened by the eternal. It is as if the apostle said, "Well, what is there after all to prevent your loving? What on the whole do you gain by selfishness! The commandment is that thou *shalt* love. Oh, but if you wish to understand yourself and life, it ought not to be necessary to be commanded; for the fact of loving men is still the only thing that is worth living for; without this love, you do not really live. And the fact of loving men is the one blessed consolation, both for here and hereafter; and the fact of loving men affords the only true knowledge of whether you are a Christian"—truly a confession of faith is not enough. Love is from the Christian standpoint commanded; but the commandment of love is the old commandment which is always new. It is not with the commandment of love as with the human commandment which becomes antiquated and disregarded with the lapse of years, or is changed in accordance with what those agree on who must obey it. No, the commandment of love continues new until the last day, equally new, even on the day when it has become the oldest. Consequently the commandment is not changed in the slightest degree, least of all by an apostle. The only change then may be that the lover becomes on more and more intimate terms with the commandment, becomes as one with the commandment he loves: that is why he speaks so gently, so sadly, almost as if he had forgotten that love is a commandment. On the other hand, if you forget that it is the apostle of love who is speaking, then you will not understand him; for such words are not the beginning of a talk about love, but they are its consummation. We do not ourselves presume to speak in this way. What is truth on the lips of a venerable and consecrated apostle might very readily be an affectation in the mouth of a beginner, whereby he would run away from the school of the commandment much too early, and escape the "school yoke." We introduce the apostle who

is speaking; we do not make his words our own, but we make ourselves his hearers, "In love, let us love one another!"

And so, only one thing more, remember *the Christian like for like, the like for like of eternity.* That Christian like for like is such an important and decisive Christian qualification that I could wish to end at least one, if not every work, where to the best of my ability I develop the Christian idea, with this thought.

Christianity is less talked about relatively in these times (I mean compared with those things about which there is so much said). But in the discourses which are heard (for attacks upon it are certainly not speeches about Christianity), the Christian doctrine is frequently presented as a certain soft, almost enervated form of love. After all, there is love and love; you predict for yourself and for your own flesh and blood, good days or happy days without anxiety, for God is love and love—about austerity there must be nothing said; everything must be about the free and easy language and nature of love. Yet thus understood, God's love easily becomes a fabulous and childish conception, the figure of Christ something so insipid and mawkish as to render it impossible that He could have been a stumbling block to the Jews or foolishness to the Greeks: that is, as Christianity was taught in our childhood.

The matter is simple enough. Christianity has abolished the Jewish like for like: "An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth"; but it has substituted in its place the like for like of eternity. Christianity always directs the attention entirely away from the external, turns it inward, and makes each one of your relationships with other men into a God-relationship: so you will surely in both senses get like for like. From the Christian standpoint a man has ultimately and essentially to do only with God, although he will still remain in the world and in the earthly relationships as they are allotted to him. But the fact of having to do with God (so one is consequently never retarded on the way, or half-way, by information or by human judgment, as if that were decisive) makes at one and the same time for the highest consolation and the greatest exertion, the greatest mildness and the greatest severity. This is man's education; for the true God-relationship is an education, God is the Teacher. But true education must be just as strict as it is mild, and conversely. And when a human teacher has many children to train at the same time, how does he carry this on? To do all this, there is naturally not time for much talking and reproof and verbosity, and if there were time, that education becomes bad as a matter of course, where there is too much talk. No, the efficient teacher trains preferably by means of the eyes. He takes the individual child's eyes away from him, that is, he compels the child to look to him for everything. God does

just this. He rules the whole world, and He trains these innumerable men by His glance. For what is conscience? In the conscience it is God who looks at a man, so the man must in everything see God. Thus does God educate. But the child who is being educated easily imagines that his relationship to his companions, the tiny world they form, is actuality, whereas the teacher by his glance teaches him that all this is used for the purpose of educating the child.

The older man also thus easily imagines that what he has to do with the world is actuality; but God teaches him to understand that all this is used only for his education. So God is the Teacher; His love combines the greatest mildness with the greatest strictness. It is as it is in nature where heaviness is also lightness. The celestial body floats easily in the infinite—sustained by the force of gravity; but if it leaves its orbit, if it becomes too light, then the lightness becomes heaviness, and it falls heavily—because of its lightness. So is God's strictness mildness in the lover and the humble, but to the hard of heart his mildness is severity. The fact that God has wished to save the world, this mildness is to the one who will not accept salvation the greatest severity, an even greater severity than if God had never wished it, but wished only to judge the world. Lo, this is the synthesis of the severity and the mildness; the fact that in everything you lay hold on God, the greatest mildness and the greatest severity.

If you will therefore listen carefully, you will yourself hear the severity in what must very definitely be called the Gospel. Thus when it was said to the centurion from Capernaum, "Be it unto you according to your faith," no more joyful tidings can be imagined, no gentler, more merciful word! And yet what was it that was said? It was said, "Be it unto you as you have believed." If we wish to apply these words to ourselves, we must say, "It will be to you as you believe; if you have the faith for salvation, then are you saved." How mild, how merciful! But is it now also certain that I have faith?—for the fact that the centurion believed, I still cannot offhand transfer to myself, as if I had faith because the centurion had it. Let us imagine that someone asked Christianity, "Is it now absolutely certain that I have faith?" Then would Christianity answer, "Be it unto you according to your faith"—or I wonder what Christ would have thought of the centurion, if instead of coming to Him in faith, he had come to Him in order thus privately to find out whether he had faith! "Be it unto you according to your faith," that is to say, it is everlastingly certain that it will be to you as you believe, that Christianity vouches for. But the fact as to whether you, just "you," have faith, is certainly not a part of the Christian doctrine and preaching, so it should tell you that you have faith.

When the timid, anxious doubts arise, lest you perhaps do not have

faith, then Christianity repeats the words unchanged, "Be it unto you according to your faith." How severe! You learn to know from the story about the centurion that he had faith. That has really nothing to do with you. And then you get to know the Christian fact, that it happened to him according to his faith—but you are not the centurion. Let us imagine that someone should say to Christianity, "It is quite certain that I have been baptized, but is it also absolutely certain that I have faith?" Then would Christianity reply, "It is to you according to your faith." The centurion, although not baptized, believed; therefore it happened to him according to his faith; only through his faith does the Gospel become a Gospel. Had the centurion, although he did come and ask Christ for help, still been somewhat irresolute in his soul as to how far Christ would be able to help him, and Christ had still said the same words to him, "Be it unto you according to your faith," then what? Would it then be a Gospel? No, not for the centurion, for it would be a judgment upon him. This "be it unto you" comes so swiftly, but it holds so powerfully this next phrase, "as you believe." Using these words as a text, one can equally well preach severity or mildness; for there is also severity in these words, the Christian severity which has not hesitated to exclude the timorous from the kingdom of God, or perhaps better, has not hesitated to teach that the timorous exclude themselves, so that, consequently, just as little as one enters into the kingdom of God through defiance, just as little does he cowardly and effeminately whine his way in.

But in these times where concerning political and economic relations, so much is said about security and safety, this is finally carried over into Christianity, and baptism is allowed to be the assurance—which is no doubt right enough, if you really believe the assurance that "it is to you as you believe." If one had the right to make baptism the assurance as a matter of course, then it would certainly be all over with severity. But God is not mocked, nor can He be cheated. He is too highly exalted in heaven for it to occur to Him that a man's exertion should in any way render him deserving. Yet He requires it; and then one thing more, that the man himself shall not presume to believe that it is something meritorious. But God is also too highly exalted in heaven childishly to play the good God with a cowardly and abandoned man. It is everlastingly certain that it will be to you as you believe; but the assurance of faith, or the assurance that you, just you, believe, you must acquire in every moment by the help of God, hence not in any external manner. You must have God's help in order to believe that you are saved through baptism. You must have God's help in order to believe that in the communion your sins are graciously forgiven. For certainly the forgiveness of sins which

is promised, is also promised to you, but the preacher has no right to say to you that you have faith, and yet it is promised to you only if you have faith. It is to you according to your faith. But everything in you which is of flesh and blood and connected with the earthly and the fearful, must despair, so that it is not possible for you to get an external certainty, a certainty once for all, and in the easier way. Lo, this is the conflict of faith in which every day may give you the opportunity to be tested. The Gospel is not the law; the Gospel will not save you through severity but through mildness; but this mildness will save you, it will not deceive you, therefore there is severity in it.

And if this like for like holds good even in relation to what most definitely may be called the Gospel, how much more then when Christianity itself proclaims the law. It is said, "*Forgive and you will also be forgiven.*" However, one might succeed in misunderstanding these words so that he imagined that it might be possible even for him to get forgiveness although he did not forgive. Truly that is a misunderstanding. The Christian meaning is: forgiveness is forgivingness; your forgiveness is your forgivingness; your forgivingness to another is your own forgiveness; the forgiveness you grant, that you get, not conversely, the forgiveness that you get, that you give. It is as if Christianity would say: "Pray to God humbly and believingly for your own forgiveness, for He is merciful as no man is. But if you wish to make a test of how you forgive, then observe yourself. If you sincerely and with all your heart forgive your enemy (but if you do this, remember that God can see it), then you also dare hope for forgiveness, for it is one and the same thing; God forgives you neither more nor less nor otherwise than as you forgive your debtors. It is only an illusion to imagine that one has forgiveness while one is slow to forgive others. No, there is not a more exact agreement between heaven above and its image in the sea, which is exactly as deep as it is high, than there is between forgiveness and forgivingness. It is also an illusion for a man to believe in his own forgiveness, if he will not forgive; for how could a man in truth believe in forgiveness whose own life is an argument against there being forgiveness! But one imagines that one personally has a God-relationship, and, on the other hand, with reference to another man, that he has a relationship to that other man, instead of seeing a God-relationship in everything. *Therefore the fact of accusing another man before God is to accuse himself, like for like.* If, humanly speaking, a man actually suffers wrong, then let him notice that he goes too far in accusing the guilty before God. Oh, that a man is so ready to deceive himself, is so ready to delude himself with the idea that a man might personally have, as it were, a private relationship to God. But the relationship with God is like a relationship with a public

official. You cannot talk confidentially with a magistrate about that which is his business—but God's business is to be God. If a servant, whom you perhaps feel a regard for, has committed a crime, a theft, for example, and you do not know what you ought to do about it, then you do not refer the matter privately to the superior sitting magistrate; for in his private capacity he does not understand anything about a theft; he immediately has the guilty apprehended and the case begins. And thus also, if you wish to pretend that you were quite outside the matter in question, and now privately wish to complain to God about your enemies: then God makes short work of it, and lays a charge against you; for before God you are yourself an offender—the fact of accusing another is an accusation against yourself. You think that God might, as it were, take your part; that God and you together might turn against your enemy, against the one who wronged you. But this is a misunderstanding. God looks impartially upon all and is the whole, while you only wish to make Him a part. If you apply to Him in His capacity as judge—moreover as a favor on His part, He warns you against doing this, for He knows what will follow as a matter of course, how severe it will be for you. But if you do not wish to have this said to you, if you refer to Him in His capacity as judge: then it does not help you because you think it is another He will judge; for you yourself made Him into your judge, and He is, like for like, at the same moment your judge, that is, He judges you also. On the other hand, if you do not undertake to accuse anyone before God, or to make God a judge, then is God the gracious God.

Let me illustrate the above by an incident. There was once a criminal who had stolen some money, among the rest a hundred dollar note. He wished to change this, and therefore he offered it to another criminal who lived in the same house. He accepted the note, went into the next room as if to get change, came out again, innocently greeted the waiting visitor as if he now saw him for the first time: in short, he defrauded him out of the hundred dollar note. The first man became so enraged at this, that in his indignation he reported the matter to the legal authorities, telling how shamefully he had been swindled. The other was naturally arrested, and arraigned as an impostor. Alas, in the trial, the first question the magistrate asked was how the accuser had obtained the money. So there were two cases. Of course the first man was wholly right in thinking that he had been swindled; he would now be the honest man, the good citizen, who reported the matter to the authorities in order to secure his rights. Oh, but the judge does not deal with matters in his private capacity, or with an isolated case one chooses to bring before him; nor does he always give the case the turn which the accuser and informer gives: the magistrate looks deeper into the

matter. And so with the God-relationship. As soon as you accuse another man before God, then there are immediately found to be two cases; just when you come to lay information about the other man, God begins to consider how you are connected with the case.

Like for like; in fact Christianity is so strict that it even maintains a rigorous inequality. It is written, "Why do you see the mote in your brother's eye but do not know of the beam in your own eye?" A devout man has piously interpreted these words in this way: The beam in your own eye is neither more nor less than the seeing, the judging the mote in your brother's eye. But the most severe like for like would certainly consist in being able to see the mote in your brother's eye become the beam in your own eye. Still Christianity is even more severe: this mote, or the looking at it judgingly, is a beam. And even if you do not see the beam, and even if no man sees it, nevertheless God sees it. Consequently a mote is a beam! Is not this a severity that transforms a mite into an elephant? Oh, if you consider that from the true Christian standpoint God is always present in everything, that everything revolves solely about Him, then you will no doubt be able to understand this severity; you will understand that seeing the mote in your brother's eye—in God's presence (and God is always present) is lese majesty. No doubt if you could choose a time and place for seeing the mote where God was not present! But in the Christian understanding this is what you must learn to realize, that God is always present; and if He is present He is also looking at you. In the moment that you are truly aware of God's presence you certainly would not think of looking at a mote in your brother's eye, nor would you think of applying this terribly strict standard—you who are yourself guilty. The fact is, that even if every better man for his own sake applies himself to thinking about God's omnipresence as present (and nothing more preposterous could be imagined than to think of God's omnipresence at a distance), then he frequently forgets God's omnipresence in his relationship to other men, forgets that God is present in the relationship, is satisfied with a merely human comparison. So one needs confidence and quiet to discover the mote. What is now the fault? The fact that you yourself forget that God is present (and He is certainly always present) or that you forget yourself in His presence. How imprudent in God's presence to judge as strictly as a mote is judged—like for like; if you will be so severe, then can God overbid you—there is a beam in your own eye! The magistrate may well have regarded it as an impudence on the part of that criminal of whom we have spoken, that he should wish to play the part of an honest man who, pursuant to law and justice, prosecutes a criminal, alas, a criminal who will himself be prosecuted pursuant to law and justice: but God regards it as presumption that a man

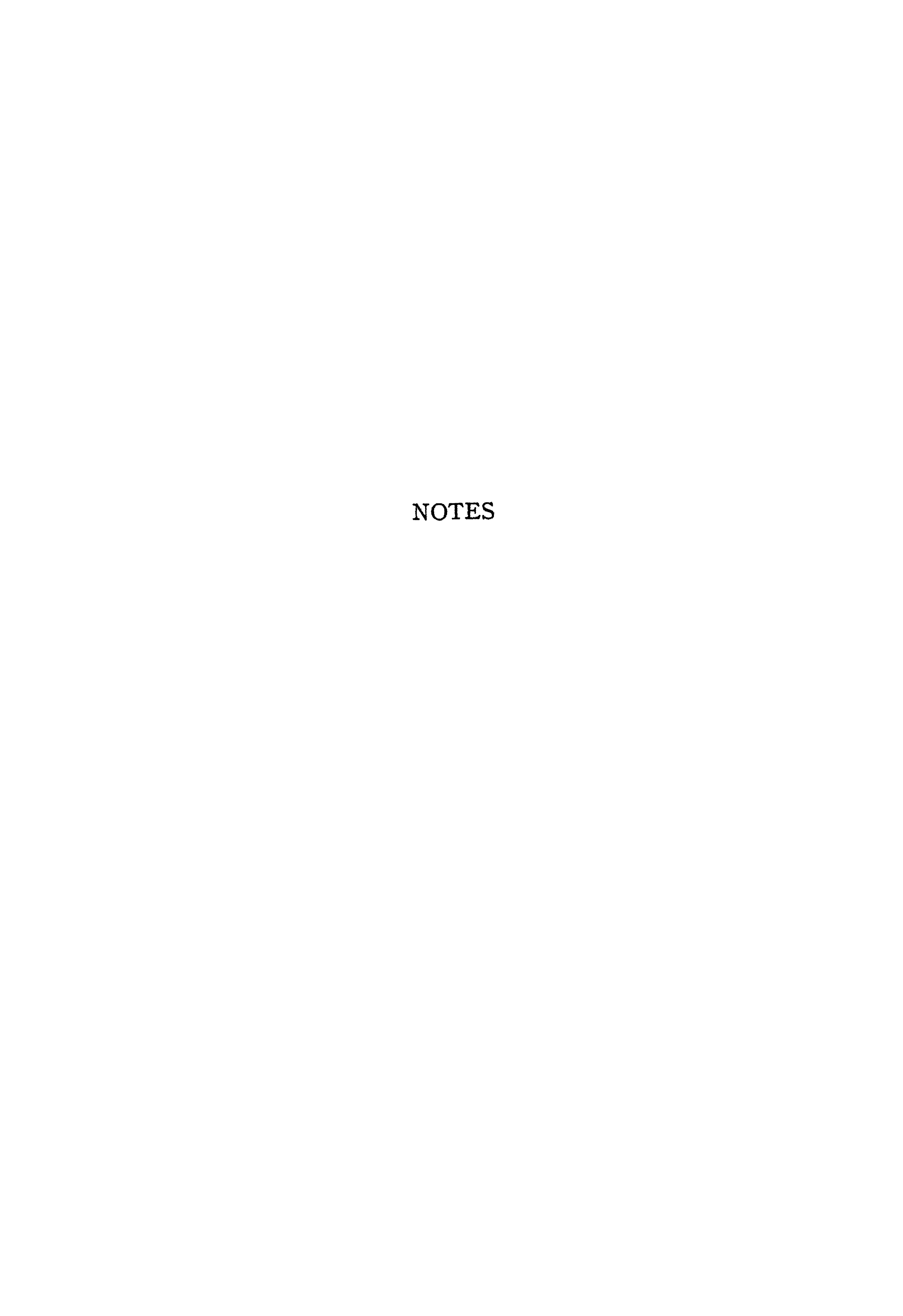
should wish to play the pure and judge the mote in his brother's eye.

How strict is not this Christian like for like! The Jewish, the worldly, the busy like for like is: as others do to you, see that you finally do the same to them. But the Christian like for like is: as you do to others, so God will do to you. From the Christian standpoint it does not concern you what the others do to you, it does not concern you personally; it is curiosity, an impertinence, a lack of sense to meddle in things which are as entirely irrelevant to you as if you were absent. You need only concern yourself with what you do to others, or with how you discover what others do to you; the direction is inward, essentially you have only to do with yourself before God.

This world of inwardness, this version of what other men call actuality, it is actuality. In this inward world the Christian like for like is native; it turns itself and wishes to turn you away from the external (yet without taking you out of the world), upward or inward. For from the Christian standpoint to love men is to love God, and to love God is to love men: what you do to men you do to God, and therefore what you do to men, that God does to you. If you are indignant at the men who wrong you, you are really indignant at God; for in the last analysis it is God who permits you to be wronged. On the contrary, if you accept with gratitude the injury from God's hand "as a good and perfect gift," then you will not be indignant at men. If you are not willing to forgive, then you really wish to do something else, you wish to make God hard-hearted so that He should not forgive: how could this hard-hearted God then forgive you? If you cannot bear men's offenses against you, how should God bear your sins against Him? No, like for like. For God Himself is really this pure like for like, the pure reproduction of what you yourself are. If you are angry, then is God angry at you; if mildness and mercy rule in your heart, then is God merciful to you. The infinite lover shows in that He will on the whole concern Himself with you, and that no one, no one so affectionately discovers even the least love in you as God does. God's relationship to man is at every moment to make more infinite that which at any moment is in man. Echo, as you know, dwells in solitude. It attends exactly, oh, so exactly, to every sound, even the least, and reproduces it exactly, oh, so exactly. If there is a word which you would not like to hear said to you, then guard yourself in saying it, watch that it does not escape you in solitude, for Echo repeats it immediately and says it to "you." If you have never been solitary, then you have never discovered that God exists; but if you truly were solitary, then you also learned that everything you say or do to another man, that God merely repeats, He repeats it with the intensification of infinity: the word of grace or of judgment which you express about another, that God repeats; He says the same word for

word, about you: and this same word is for you grace or judgment. But who believes in Echo, when day and night he lives in the tumult of the city? And who believes that such an observer exists, who corresponds so exactly to the like for like? Who believes in it, if from earliest childhood he has been accustomed to live in tumult? If in the confusion he hears something about the Christian way, he is still unable to hear rightly; as the Christianly does not echo in his inner man, he does not discover the echo which is the Christian like for like. Here in the midst of life's alarms he perhaps does not notice eternity's or God's repetition of the spoken word; he imagines that its reproduction would perhaps be in the external and in an outward manner. But the external is too dense a body to be the echo, and the sensual ear is too dull to catch the repetition of eternity. But whether a man discovers it or not, that same word is still said about him that he himself uttered. Such a man lives on then as one who does not know what is said about him. Now perhaps it is just as well if a man is unconscious of what the town says about him; besides it might be untrue. Oh, but how does it help either for the moment or through the years, to be unconscious of what eternity says about him—if it is nevertheless the truth!

No, like for like! We truly do not say that as if we meant that a man ultimately deserved grace. Oh, the fact that you learn from the first to lay hold on God is everything, is just that you simply have no merit. Test this merely by saying to eternity, "I have deserved," then eternity answers, "You have deserved. . . ." If you will have merit and have deserved something, then is it only punishment. If not believing you will appropriate to yourself another's merit, then you get according to your merit. We do not say this as if we meant that it would be better if anyone day in and day out were to sit in the fear of death in order to listen to the repetition of eternity; we do not even say that it would be better than the pettiness which in these times makes use of the love of God to sell indulgences from every more dangerous and more strenuous conflict. No, but as the well-disciplined child has an unforgettable impression of the strictness, so must also the man who lays hold upon the love of God, if he does not wish "effeminately" or thoughtlessly to take it in vain, have an unforgettable fear and trembling, although he rests in the love of God. Such a one will certainly avoid speaking to God about another's wrong to him, about the mote in his brother's eye. For such a one will prefer to speak to God only about grace, in order that this fateful word "justice" shall not cause him to forfeit everything through what he has himself evoked, the strict like for like.



NOTES

NOTES

In many cases the scriptural references cited below are not exact quotations, but suggest the cited passage. *Sml. Pap.* refers to Kierkegaard's collected papers, most of which are not in translation.

PAGE

6 figs from thistles] Matthew 7:16.
8 "issues of life"] Proverbs 4:23.
8 God dwells in a light] I Timothy 6:16.
9 "benumb the spirit"] Ephesians 4:30.
10 The apostle John says] I John 3:18.
10 out of the heart's abundance] Matthew 12:34.
10 Sirach says] Wisdom of Sirach 6:4.
11 not in the scriptural sense] Matthew 6:3.
12 the prophet Nathan] II Samuel 12:1-7.
13 "who built his house"] Matthew 7:24 ff.
13 who can kill the body] Matthew 10:28.
15 ambitious thinkers] the Hegelian school of philosophy.
16 As Jacob limped] Genesis 32: 24-32.
16 "in a moment"] I Corinthians 15:52.
17 "temptingly"] Matthew 22:35.
17 of the "royal law"] James 2:8.
18 "Do not even the heathen"] as Christ said of the publicans, Matthew 5:45-46.
19 "was neighbor to him"] Luke 10:36.
21 "all things are become new"] II Corinthians 5:17.
22 Is not every generation] See "The Disciple at Second Hand," *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 74-93. Trans. by David F. Swenson, Princeton University Press, 1936.
22 according to the Scriptures] I Corinthians 7:31.
23 in any human heart] I Corinthians 2:9.
23 When Christ said] Matthew 10:17.
23 "as wise as serpents"] Matthew 10:16.
24 "the savor in himself"] Mark 9:50.
24 the issue of blood] Matthew 9:20.
26 "Call no man happy"] ascribed to Solon, Herodotus i, 32.
28 "more than conquers"] Romans 7:37.
29 it is said about the tongue] James 3:10.
30 with a hundred eyes] referring to Argus. Mythology.
31 where he can go to buy new oil] Matthew 25:1 ff.
31 that mighty Eastern emperor] Darius, who ordered a slave to say to him daily, "Sire, remember Athens." Herodotus v, 105.
31 thraldom of habit] See "The Rotation Method," *Either/Or*, I, 234-47. Trans. by David F. Swenson, Princeton University Press, 1944.
32 "the one who wanders hither and thither"] Wisdom of Sirach 36:18.
38 put down "all high things"] II Corinthians 10:5.
38 steals a precious word] Kierkegaard discusses this in the discourse, "The Thorn in the Flesh," *Edifying Discourses*, Vol. IV, 49-50. Trans. by David F. and Lillian M. Swenson, Augsburg Publishing House, 1946.
41 only the first time of falling in love] S.K. gives an amusing discussion of first love in the chapter, "The First Love," *Either/Or*, I, 208-9.
44 does not Paul say] I Corinthians 7:9.
44 "Do not even the heathen"] Matthew 5:4-6.
44 "the virtues of heathendom"] Augustine, *The City of God*, 19:25.
49 that austere judge] John the Baptist, with his raiment of camel's hair. Matthew 3:4.

52 God is love] I John 4:8.
52 "God's fellow-laborers"] I Corinthians 3.9.
52 God took from your side] referring to Eve's creation, Genesis 2 22.
57 he is "not born"] the classes below the Sudras in the Indian caste system, who are regarded as "not born."
58 *take the disciples out of the world*] John 17:15.
61 like lost sheep] Luke 10:3.
63 "counsel of scorners"] Psalms 1:1.
65 like Luther, who understood] at the Diet of Worms.
68 laughed, too, at Tobias] Tobit 2:8.
69 you shall not covet] Exodus 20:17.
72 like the cape the king casts off] In contrast to this use of the "differences of life" constituting a disguise, S.K. emphasizes God's assumption of the servant form as not being a disguise. *Philosophical Fragments*, pp. 24-25.
74 a parable] Matthew 21:28-31.
77 "way to perdition"] Boswell, *Life of Johnson*, iv, Ch. 9.
79 that simple wise man] Socrates.
79 "in order to justify himself"] Luke 10:29.
79 God takes the wise] I Corinthians 3:19.
81 "Christ was the end of the law"] Romans 10:4.
81 "No one could convict Him"] John 8:46.
81 "there was no deceit"] I Peter 2:22.
82 even when He wept] Luke 19:41-42.
82 "Mary has chosen the better part"] Luke 10:42.
82 with a glance rebuked] Luke 22:6.
82 who gladly left their homes] Luke 10:17.
82 when He found them sleeping] Matthew 26:40.
82 pointed to His disciple] Matthew 12:49.
82 when He *could* no longer work] John 9:4.
85 "a shadow of things to come"] Colossians 2:17.
86 Paul says in another place] I Timothy 1:5.
88 whether each individual] See *Thoughts on Crucial Situations in Human Life*, pp. 44-45. Trans. by David F. Swenson, Augsburg Publishing House, 1941.
90 "Get thee behind me"] Matthew 16:23.
91 as wandering sheep] Matthew 10:16.
92 will first and foremost belong to God] This same thought has been beautifully expressed by Christina Rossetti:

This say I, having counted up the cost,
This, though I be the feeblest of God's host;
The sorriest sheep Christ shepherds with His crook:
Yet, while I love my God the most, I deem
That I can never love you overmuch;
I love Him more, so let me love you too.
Yea, as I apprehend it, love is such
I cannot love you if I love not Him,
I cannot love Him, if I love not you.

94 "without God in the world"] Ephesians 2:12.
95 great matchless undertaking] a sly allusion to Grundtvig's matchless discovery.
96 when a great number do wrong] See note on "That Individual" in *The Point of View*, pp. 112-14. Trans. by Walter Lowrie, Oxford University Press, 1939.
100 "weary of his groaning"] Psalms 6:7.
100 unhappy Sara] Tobit 3:1.
105 compare himself to a "gadfly"] Plato, *Apology*, 31; *Sml. Pap.* VII 1. A. 69; *The Journals of Søren Kierkegaard*, ¶577. Trans. by Alexander Dru, Oxford University Press, 1938.
105 "something divine"] the voice which Socrates said came to him from the oracle. Plato, *Apology*, 31.

109 could already read long before it could spell] This passage emphasizes the contrast in educational methods between Kierkegaard's time and our own.
110 that divine elixir] ἰχώρ which prolonged life indefinitely. Homer, *Iliad*, V, 340.
110 a people of priests] II Peter 2:5, 9.
110 a point outside the world] referring to the demand of Archimedes for a point on which to rest his lever.
110 the mountain which brought forth a mouse] Horace, *Ars Poetica*, 139. "The mountains will be in labor; an absurd mouse will be born."
112 "with your conscience"] See note for page 88.
117 secret of inwardness] See *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 362, 370-71. Trans. by David F. Swenson, Princeton University Press, 1941.
117 "mystery of faith"] I Timothy 3:9.
118 the twelve legions of angels] Matthew 26:53; Luke 9:55.
120 a *bound heart*] See sermon by Phillips Brooks, "The Law of Liberty."
125 "it is not good for man to be alone"] Genesis 2:18.
126 Jesus says to Simon Peter] John 21:15 ff.
127 "groans against" men] James 5:9.
130 "Corban"] Mark 7:11.
131 mountain of Venus] In his *Papiren* VIII 1. A. 17, Kierkegaard says: "There is something very profound in what is told about the Mountain of Venus, in that he who went to it, could never find his way back. There is always that difficulty in finding the way back from pleasure." According to mediaeval legend, Tannhauser is supposed to be the only one who ever found his way back.
136 the thought that your blood] Matthew 27:25.
137 the inhumanity of a raging mob] See note on "That Individual," *Point of View*, pp. 114-16.
140 no one ascends to heaven] John 3:13.
142 simple wise man of old] Plato, *Symposium*, 204. The remark, however, was made by Diotima, not Socrates.
150 "salute no man on the way"] Luke 10:4.
153 "tribute to whom tribute is due"] Romans 13:7.
155 "Marvel not at this"] I John 3.13.
159 the early Church Fathers] St. Augustine, *City of God*, 19:25.
161 offense and foolishness] I Corinthians 1:13.
161 as Christ early commended Himself] John 16:2.
162 on "du" terms] the continental second person singular pronoun used in the address of familiarity.
162 Woe to the one] Matthew 18:7.
170 feeding the multitude] Matthew 14:13-21.
171 and "digged deep"] Luke 6:48.
171 "how high will he be able to build his tower"] Luke 14:28 ff.
172 nothing, which can (not) be said or done] The text reads, "so that it becomes edifying"; there is evidently the omission of a "not" here, which has been indicated in the translation.
172 "Do everything for edification"] I Corinthians 14:26.
172 no word in the language] Another evident omission of a "not" which changes the intended meaning.
173 speak with the tongues of men] I Corinthians 13:1.
173 the emptiest of all speeches] The Danish word used is *uudtømmeligste*, which means "inexhaustible"; the word apparently intended is from *utømme*—"to drain" or "empty," hence "emptiest."
176 to rule one's own spirit] Proverbs 16:32.
176 The one who loves much] Luke 7:47.
178 as a devout man has said] Abraham a Sancta Clara, an Austrian divine. See *Sml. Pap.* VII 1. A. 41.
187 "feared most of all"] Socrates. Plato, *Apology*, 29.
188 warn against judging] Matthew 7:1.

200 all its walls are mirrors] like the Hall of Mirrors in the palace at Versailles.
209 paganism and Christianity are agreed] referring to Pandora's box, in which only hope was left.
212 which shall not be put to shame] Philippians 1:20.
214 perfect even as He is perfect] Matthew 5:48.
214 only One who is good] Matthew 19:17.
217 "All things are yours"] I Corinthians 3:21.
217 he who loses his soul] Luke 17:33.
219 the greatest tyrant] the Roman emperor Domitian. Suetonius, *Domitian*, chap. 3.
223 the strange word by which it is called] irony.
224 that noble wise man himself says] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 151; see *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 15.
227 "Love gives fearlessness"] I John 4:17.
228 "out of the eater came forth meat"] Samson's riddle, Judges 14:14.
228 In the Scriptures we read] Luke 7:47.
229 the dog that discovered purple] Pollux, *Onomasticon*, I, 45-6.
231 a child in malice] I Corinthians 14:20.
232 a divine madness] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 244; *Fear and Trembling*, p. 30. Trans. by Walter Lowrie, Princeton University Press, 1941.
233 "forsaken, hated, bearing His cross"] Kingo's psalm, "Under Jesus' Cross."
233 in the fiery furnace] Daniel 3:21-30.
239 is hidden behind His back] Isaiah 38:17.
240 faith is the substance] Hebrews 11:1.
240 The Scriptures teach] Romans 7:8.
241 one must still wait for one thing, the occasion] S.K. had reflected much upon the "occasion," as such. See *Either/Or*, I, 192-95.
249 more gloriously than did that Roman] Quintus Fabius Maximus, the "Delayer."
255 "But to do good"] Hebrews 13:16.
255 must "groan against"] James 5:9.
255 Woe to the one] Matthew 23:14.
255 "hinder our prayers"] I Peter 3:7.
256 the good Samaritan] Luke 10:30 ff.
257 the story about the woman] Luke 21:1 ff.
258 that foreign prince] Jugurtha. Sallust, *Jugurtha*, 3:5.
259 would not take money] Socrates. Plato, *Apology*, 19, 39.
259 the apostle Paul] I Thessalonians 2:6.
260 A pagan emperor] Vespasian Suetonius, *Vespasian*, 23.
260 a sweet savor] II Corinthians 2:15.
261 Lazarus was laid] Luke 16:20.
263 a picture which represents a brave sailor] Commander P. R. Sølling. The lithograph was popular in S.K.'s time.
266 It is told of the apostle Peter] Acts 3:1 ff.
268 "And having done all, to stand"] Ephesians 6:13.
268 Paul says in another place] Romans 8:37.
269 unlike that Greek commander] Pyrrhus.
271 The words read] Matthew 5:23.
272 the Scriptures say] Matthew 5:25.
272 who through the apostle] II Corinthians 5:20.
280 "Weep then softly over the dead"] Wisdom of Sirach 22:12.
280 "If I forget thee"] Psalms 137:5-6.
283 as the widow did the judge] Luke 18: 2-3.
292 for what (I) cannot do, I can leave to him] The text reads, "for what He cannot do, I can leave to Him," which is obviously an error.
294 being able himself to do anything] See *Edifying Discourses*, IV, 20 ff.; *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, pp. 417-27.
295 "to persuade men"] II Corinthians 5:11.
295 in another place] I Thessalonians 2:4-6.

296 "Man is" has become "the measure of all things"] Principle of Protagoras. Plato, *Cratylus*, 385; *Philosophical Fragments*, p. 30 and note.
297 according to the accusation] Plato, *Apology*, 24, 25.
302 "many times and in many ways"] Hebrews 1:1.
302 the apostle John who says] I John 4:7.
304 "an eye for an eye"] Exodus 21:24.
303 the centurion from Capernaum] Matthew 8:5-13.
306 "Forgive and you will also be forgiven"] Matthew 6:14.
308 It is written] Matthew 7:3.